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The law of forgiveness

THE LAW OF FORGIVENESS



THE
LAW OF FORGIVENESS

AS PRESENTED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

A Study in Biblical Theology.

✓ BY

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TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND

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BY PERMISSION

IN REMEMBRANCE OF PAST YEARS

PREFACE.

THE following essay is based entirely on personal study of the New Testament, and of certain portions of the Old Testament which throw light upon the subject of Forgiveness. In preparing the essay I have, in general, refrained from consulting commentaries, patristic or modern. The few deviations from this rule of abstention from the use of exegetical literature are noted, as they occur. A similar rule has been followed in regard to other post-Apostolic writings, whether doctrinal or illustrative, formal or incidental. No reference has been made to the history or development of Christian doctrine concerning forgiveness or retribution. In some concluding remarks I have, of necessity named, but have not discussed, two opposite theories of eschatology, which have been put forward at various epochs and in various forms

In making a study of the teaching of Christ on forgiveness and the unforgiven state, I have judged it at once more reverent, and, from the standpoint of the science of theology, more useful, to allow no lustre of subsidiary and derivative lights to cross or replace the direct stream of illumination which flows from the words of the Son of God, Who is the Light of the World. It would be impossible to draw the line between exegetic and constructive literature on the one hand, and, on the other, controversial publications which, with-

out disparaging, I venture to think better excluded from the list of means used for the formation of opinion as to the meaning of the words of Christ and His Apostles.

At the same time it is necessary to recognise that no opinion is, even so, independent of the thoughts of others, and that one's own reading of the New Testament itself is unavoidably coloured, to some extent, by reminiscences impossible to identify of books read in the past. Yet I may perhaps state, without affectation, that the nature of my memory is not such as to enable me to retain, in the concrete, the dicta of authors so read. My chief debt is always to those teachers who have taught me *how* to read and study the sacred records; and among such teachers I must name, as in this respect a source of help which I cannot measure, the venerable English theologian, to whom I am permitted to dedicate this little book.

I have used Westcott and Hort's text of the Greek Testament, and have not felt it necessary at any point to discuss alternative readings. On Lc. xxiii. 34 I accept their judgment, but rest no argument upon the probability of the verse being 'no part of the original text of St. Luke.' Elsewhere I have taken their conclusion as decisive.

It may perhaps be well to indicate the attitude adopted in these pages with regard to the higher criticism of the New Testament, including under that term all questions concerning the date, authorship, integrity, and historical value of particular books.

I have not discussed, nor have I on the other hand

positively assumed, the authenticity of any book of the New Testament. In speaking of the books I have, indeed, frequently referred to the Apostles, whose names they severally bear, as the authors ; but in no case, I think, have I used any argument which would be invalidated, if the book in question were shown to have been written a generation later.

Again, at the risk of censure, I have ventured to approach the exegesis of passages in the Synoptic Gospels without a pre-conceived, or definitely accepted, Synoptic theory to guide me.

This course, as regards authenticity and structure of books, I have followed deliberately ; not in ignorance of the views or arguments put forward by representative scholars in England and Germany, or in disregard of the importance of many conclusions more or less clearly established in recent years. My silence on these questions is due to a conviction that they stand apart from, and do not directly affect, the discussion of the Law of Forgiveness as presented in the New Testament.

The New Testament, whatever the origin and history of the several books of which it consists, is a literature, unique and from, at latest, the latter half of the second century admittedly recognised, with reservations of no essential moment, as an authoritative source and standard of Christian doctrine—*theological and ethical*. As a literature it may legitimately be studied, like any other, with or without reference to the critical analysis or precise authorship of each constituent book ; while

as a source and standard of Christian belief, it may properly be quoted, examined and interpreted independently of such reference, when our object is simply to ascertain what is, and not what might have been, the teaching of the New Testament in a particular subject. I have mentioned the latter half of the second century as a time by which the New Testament is admitted on all hands to have existed, as we now have it; though, apart from the Second Epistle of St. Peter, which I have not had occasion to use, we might fairly name the third or fourth decade of that century as the epoch below which no critic of any weight now proposes to date any of the Canonical Books.¹

In thus claiming that the validity of an enquiry as to what the New Testament teaches does not depend upon the view which we may hold as to the authority for that teaching or the origin of particular books, I do not wish to disguise my own conviction that in the Books of the New Testament—Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypse—we have a body of strictly Apostolic—and not of merely or mainly post-Apostolic—testimony,—testimony authentic, veracious, intelligent, and (in many cases) autoptic—to the teachings, the ‘works’ of power, and the very words of Him, Who spake as ‘never man spake’ before or since.

For several kindly and suggestive criticisms of portions of my manuscript I am indebted and desire

¹It may be enough to refer to Harnack’s *Chronologie der Altchristlichen Litteratur* (passim).

to make grateful acknowledgment to the Rev. W. Sanday, D.D., Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford ; to the Rev. V. H. Stanton, D.D., Ely Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge ; to my cousin the Rev. H. Brereton Jones, M.A., Senior Curate of St. Giles in the Fields ; and, not least, to the Rev. J. O. F. Murray, M.A., Fellow and Dean of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, who has further been so good as to read a great part of the proofs.

Deeply conscious of the manifold imperfection of my workmanship, I trust that this little study of Forgiveness may perhaps lead a few students of Biblical Theology to examine afresh the doctrine of the New Testament.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
A.— <i>The Law of Forgiveness</i> :—	
1. General idea of Forgiveness.. .. .	4
2. Pre-Christian use of the word <i>ἄφεσις</i> , and of <i>ἀφιέναι</i> in sense “forgive”: (a) <i>ἄφεσις</i> in classical Greek. (b) Hebrew words = “forgive”; (c) usage of LXX.	5
3. Use of <i>ἀφιέναι</i> and <i>ἄφεσις</i> in the New Testament.. .. .	13
4. The conception of Forgiveness deduced from the usage of the New Testament; primarily from the language of Christ Himself, secondarily from the statements of the Apostles	17
(i) Forgiveness and the Mission of the Baptist	18
(ii-x. Synoptic records of the words of Christ)	
(ii) Christ’s Preaching at Nazareth	23
(iii) The Lord’s Prayer	27
(iv) The Healing of the Paralytic	32
(v) Forgiveness of ‘the woman which was a sinner’	35
(vi) The sin which shall not be forgiven	37
(vii) The unmerciful servant	49
(viii) The Last Supper	51
(ix) The ‘Word from the Cross’	53
(x) Forgiveness of sins for all nations.. .. .	56
(xi) Testimony of St. John	58
(xii) Teaching of St. Peter	62
(xiii) „ „ St. Paul	65
(xiv) „ „ St. James	74
(xv) „ „ the ‘Epistle to the Hebrews’	75

	PAGE
5. The object-matter of Forgiveness	80
6. The <i>Law</i> of Forgiveness, its conditions, and consequent limitation	84
7. The consequences of Forgiveness: a subject outside the present enquiry	89
8. Forgiveness in Parable	91
 B.— <i>The Law of Retribution, and the Unforgiven State :—</i>	
1. Sin, Suffering, and Retribution, as matter of experience and of moral intuition	94
2. The Teaching of Christ concerning Retribution and the Unforgiven State	100
(a) Interrelation of Laws of Retribution and Forgiveness as declared by Christ	101
(b) Testimony of the Synoptists. Unique position of ‘ St. Matthew ’	101
(i) Testimony of St. Matthew	102
(ii) „ „ St. Mark	124
(iii) „ „ St. Luke	126
(c) Testimony of St. John	130
(d) „ „ the Apostolic Epistles	135
3. The object-matter of Retribution	143
4. The Law of Retribution in operation	144
 C.— <i>Concluding Remarks :—</i>	
Bearing of the Laws of Retribution and Forgiveness on Eschatology	146
<i>Appendix</i> —Additional Note on ‘ Confession of Sins ’	153
Index of Subjects	157
Index of passages discussed or quoted	158

ABBREVIATIONS.

Mt.	=	St. Matthew.
Mc.	=	St. Mark.
Lc.	=	St. Luke.
Apoc.	=	Apocalypse (Revelation).
LXX.	=	Septuagint.
E.V.	=	English Versions.
<i>seq.</i>	=	'and following verses.'
<i>f.</i>	=	" " "

ERRATA.

- p. 12, *l.* 8, *for* 'whole' *read* 'the whole.'
p. 18, *l.* 1 of note, *for* 'an' *read* 'on.'
p. 20, *l.* 2, *for* 'in' *read* 'is.'
p. 27, *l.* 2, *for* '1-3' *read* '1-4.'
p. 34, *l.* 1, *for* 'ii. 1' *read* 'ii. 16.'
p. 65, *l.* 8, *for* 'i. 47' *read* 'i. 14.'
p. 78, *l.* 27, *for* 'subject' *read* 'object.'

Also read ἵλεως (p. 10, *l.* 25), ἰάσασθαι (p. 23, *l.* 14), ἀφέσει (p. 23, *l.* 19), ἀφιέναι (p. 69, *l.* 21, p. 72, *l.* 1), in correction of omitted or misplaced accents.

THE LAW OF FORGIVENESS.

INTRODUCTION.

JUDAISM and Christianity are differentiated from all other religions, if by no other specific feature common to both, at all events by the prominence in them alone amid every variety of historical and literary circumstance, of the related concepts of Sin and of Forgiveness.

Propitiation of superhuman powers or persons, and sacrifice, in one or another form, as a means of propitiation, are ideas which belong, with few and doubtful exceptions, to all religions.

But propitiation does not necessarily involve confession of sin or of moral uncleanness: nor does sacrifice imply the superior holiness, it implies merely the superior strength, of the Being to whom it is offered.

Without denying the existence, in the ritual and even in the mythology of many religions other than the Jewish and the Christian, of phrases, acts, and symbols which recognise the fact of sin and (less definitely) the need of forgiveness, it may safely be maintained that in none do these conceptions attain a depth and permanence entitling them, as in the case of Judaism and of Christianity they are entitled, to be selected as concepts essential, central, and characteristic.

That, which in those other systems is sporadic, in these is persistent and normal.

The correlated conceptions, which thus distinguish from all other religions the religion of the children of Abraham and the religion of the disciples of Christ, are unequally developed and alternately predominant in the earlier and the later revelation. If sin is the subject of the Old Testament, forgiveness of sin is the argument of the New Testament. The hamartiology of the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalter is deepened indeed and widened in the Gospels and Apostolic Letters, but becomes at the same time subordinate to the soteriology which, in the Old Testament, lay in the background and was only now and again suffered to illumine apocalyptically the stern and dark delineation of Divine intolerance, and punishment, of sin.

In view of this change in the relative prominence of the correlative concepts—a change which is the obvious and necessary consequence of the Advent of Him Who, while fulfilling, as we may believe, yet earlier and more primeval counsels, should ‘save His people from their sins’—it is startling to the superficial observer to find that in the recorded utterances of the Christ Himself there is, quantitatively, more concerning sin and punishment than concerning forgiveness.

And thus it comes that a modern writer,¹ whose attempt to pourtray the Life of Jesus, viewed merely as a man, has happily awakened among his own countrymen fresh interest in the records which are his

¹ the late M. Renan.

sources, finds a large part of the words of Jesus harsh and passionate, unworthy of the gentle prophet, and deformative of the beauty of the Gospel.

And though few, if any, of those who call themselves Christians and also study the New Testament, feel entitled thus to judge, nevertheless modern Christian thought and practice would seem not seldom inclined silently, and thereby more really, to neglect those revelations of wrath which perhaps they may not actually repudiate or presume to expunge.

For the student of Christian theology any such method, whether positive or negative, express or tacit, is always illegitimate. It is the business of the Christian theologian to analyse, and not to expurgate, the Gospels.

A.—THE LAW OF FORGIVENESS.

(1) *General Idea of Forgiveness.*

Forgiveness, in the greatest extension of the term, still presupposes debt or transgression and involves the conception of release. Forgiveness implies a free grant or gift of release from debt proper or from that other obligation, arising from criminous aggression, which is felt to be debt and something more : of release that is, from obligation, whether incurred, to use the terminology of Roman Law, by breach of contract or by delict. It would be an endless, and probably not a fruitful, task to pursue the conception through all the minute varieties of debt or transgression to which it is forensically applicable. It is sufficient to note the existence,—in that body of jurisprudence, which sums up the thoughts of Graeco-Roman antiquity on justice and injustice, on right and wrong between man and man,—of a twofold, and apparently irresolvable, division of obligations, analogous in many respects, though not precisely, to a division which occurs in Hebrew and Christian literature. On the other hand, while thus using the categories of Roman law in elucidation of the universal idea of forgiveness, it is needful to observe at once that forgiveness in itself and, particularly, as conceived in the Old and New Testaments, is not merely, or even primarily, a *forensic* phenomenon.

(2) *History of the term ἄφεσις.*

In order to obtain a clear view of the significance of 'forgiveness' or 'remission of sins' in the New Testament, it will be well to trace briefly the history of

(a) the use of the word ἄφεσις in classical Greek; and

(c) the use of the verb ἀφιέναι in the LXX., in the sense, or nearly in the sense, of 'forgive,'—
interposing

(b) a notice of the words used in the Hebrew original to express 'forgiveness' or something like it.

(a) *ἄφεσις in classical Greek.*

The substantive ἄφεσις occurs rarely in pre-Alexandrine, or indeed in any but Hellenistic, literature.

It would not appear to be used by any extant author previous to Plato. But as the word is not given as a Platonism either in the list collected by Timaeus Sophista or by any other lexicographer or grammarian, it is to be presumed that the form was not actually coined by Plato. Plato himself seems to use it three times only, once in the 'Politicus' (p. 273) of the 'release' of a slave, and twice in one passage in the 'Laws' (ix. p. 869 D) in the sense of 'acquittal' or 'release from' a charge, though under circumstances which make the quittance very nearly equivalent to a remission of debt or penalty :—

ὁ δὲ περὶ τῆς ἀφέσεως εἴρηται φόνου πατρί, ταῦτόν τοῦτο ἔστω περὶ ἀπάσης τῶν τοιούτων ἀφέσεως, ἔὰν ὁστισοῦν ὁττωῦν ἀφίῃ τοῦτο ἐκόν, ὡς ἀκουσίον γεγονότος τοῦ φόνου οἱ τε καθαρμοὶ γιγνέσθων τῷ δράσαντι καὶ ἐνιαυτὸς εἰς ἔστω τῆς ἐκδημίας ἐν νόμῳ.

The preceding context, in which the verb ἀφιέναι has already occurred, shows that the ἄφεσις φόνον is acquittal, by the voluntary voice of the dying victim of a fatal but unpremeditated assault, of the assailant from the guilt and accusation of ordinary wilful homicide. The deposition, thus freely given by the victim, has the effect of placing the slayer on the level of the unintentional homicide.

Thus the 'Laws' of Plato in this instance, as so often, offer an example of a mode of thought and a literary usage then, so far as we can judge, unfamiliar to the Greek mind, if not entirely unknown, but destined to acquire, long afterwards, the dignity of permanence.

If the word-form itself was minted, as is probable, before the time of Plato, it was Plato, so far as extant writings and lexicography afford evidence, who attached to ἄφεσις the meaning which, amplified and impregnated with Hebrew thought, but not generically changed, it was to bear in the literature of a new religion.

The idea of voluntary absolution, complete or partial, of a wrong-doer by the person injured would not seem to have been germane to the philosophy of Aristotle or of any post-Aristotelian philosophers, Stoic, Epicurean, or Sceptic.

The future history of the word ἄφεσις was determined by the fact that in the LXX. version of the Old Testament the verb ἀφίημι was employed as a rendering of one of several Hebrew words of similar, but not identical, meaning.

A brief examination of the use and meaning of the more important of these words is essential alike to a full appreciation of the force of the word *ἄφεσις* as it enters the field of New Testament usage, and, more immediately, to a right definition of the *idea* of 'forgiveness' as conceived by Hebrew minds and handed down to Christian theology.

(b) *Hebrew words meaning 'forgive.'*

Two distinct Hebrew words are, in the English versions of the Old Testament, constantly represented, and at least two others are once or more represented, by one or other of the English words 'forgive' and 'pardon,' which may be regarded as, in Biblical usage, synonymous.

The two words regularly so rendered are נָשָׁא and סָלַח. Of these the latter occurs somewhat more frequently than the former. As regards distribution among different books¹ it appears that נָשָׁא occurs as follows:—

once in Genesis: l. 17 (Joseph's brethren), LXX.

¹ Ἀφες.

thrice in Exodus: x. 17 (by Pharaoh), προσδέξασθε;

xxxii. 31 (Moses—of sin of Israel), LXX. εἰ ἀφείς—

ἄφες; xxxiv. 7, LXX. ἀφαιρῶν.

¹ No attempt is here made to do more than merely record, lexicographically, the occurrences of the two words in our Hebrew text of the O.T. It belongs to the Hebraist to make a digest of the lexicographic evidence with reference to the constituent documents into which the several books, as we have them, may be analysable.

once in Numbers : xiv. 19, in conjunction with נָּסַח ,
 $\text{אַφες—ἔλεως ἐγένου.}$

once in Joshua : xxiv. 19 ($\text{οὐκ ἀνήσει τα ἁμαρτήματα}$
 $\text{ὑμῶν κ.τὰ ἀνομήματα.}$).

twice in 1 Samuel : xv. 25, and xxv. 28 (LXX. ἄρον.).

once in Job : vii. 21 (LXX. $\text{διὰ τί οὐκ ἐποιήσω τῆς ἀνομίας}$
 μου λήθην.).

thrice in Psalms : xxv. 18 (v. inf.), xxxii. 1, lxxxv. 2.

thrice in Isaiah : ii. 9 ; xxxiii. 24 (v. inf.) ; xlv. 21.

once in Micah : ix. 18.

On the other hand נָּסַח occurs *never* in Genesis, *once* in Exodus (xxxiv. 9), six times in Leviticus, and four times in Numbers (xiv. 17, 20, etc.), Deuteronomy xxix. 30, *never* in the Books of Samuel, but in the Books of Kings four times, viz., in Solomon's Prayer, 1 K. viii. 30, 39 (and in the corresponding place in 2 Chron.), also in 2 K. v. 18, xxiv. 14, thrice in Psalms, xxv. 11 (LXX. ἰλάσῃ), lxxxvi. 5 (ἐπιεικῆς), ciii. 3 (τ.εὐλατεύοντα) ; once in Isaiah, lv. 7, and once in Amos, vii. 3 ; six times in Jeremiah, xxxi. 34, xxxvi. 3 ; v. 1, 7, xxxiii. 8, l. 20 ; also once in Lam., iii. 42 ; once in Daniel, ix. 19 (v. inf. and cf. the noun-form in ix. 9) ; once in Nehemiah, ix. 17.

It is remarkable that נָּסַח , in the sense of 'forgive,' never occurs, and נָּסַח only once, in Deuteronomy. In Deut. xxi. 8, the Niphal of נָּסַח is (in E.V.) translated 'forgive.'

The two verbs, נָּסַח and נָּסַח , were not originally, or indeed ever, synonymous. נָּסַח meaning properly 'lift

up' or 'take up and off' (as a load) is a prototype rather of the *αἴρειν* than of the *ἀφιέναι* of the New Testament, and is several times (v. *supr.*) rendered by *αἴρειν* in the LXX. Yet it, and not *סלח*, is the word elsewhere rendered in LXX. by *ἀφιέναι*. It emphasises a very important aspect of 'forgiveness' as subsequently conceived, an aspect which will demand special attention presently; yet upon the whole it connotes rather less than is connoted by *סלח*.

The latter verb, whose primitive etymological affinities are uncertain, appears to imply intrinsic purification rather than external relief or disburdening; but it also implies a propitious attitude of the superior Being.

Quite in accordance with this we find that, to judge by the range of usage in the O.T., the word belongs especially, though not exclusively, to sacerdotal contexts. Not that it is by any means a merely ceremonial term. Rather it expresses the spiritual purification of which ritual cleansings and atonements are symbolic. Such ritual atonement is regularly expressed by the word *כפר*, which, however, is sometimes used metaphorically of a spiritual process (as in Is. xlii. 3) and, being so used, left to Christian theology a legacy of which something must be said hereafter.

Meanwhile the use, last mentioned, of *כפר* side by side with the employment of *נשא* and *סלח* suffices to justify the statement that in the resultant theology of the Jewish Church it was realised that sin must be 'clothed upon and covered, and atoned for,' as well as

‘lifted away,’ and ‘purged—with propitiation of the Divine Majesty.’

That these metaphors, as such, are to some extent reciprocally inconsistent, is no argument either against the accuracy of any one of them or against the reality and value of the complex doctrine, in which they alternately emerge. No single metaphor can adequately present a spiritual fact; and every separate metaphor is inevitably redundant at some point, and to that extent conflicts with the supplementary metaphors necessitated by the inadequacy aforesaid of each by itself.

It has already been observed that as between the two principal verbs used in the Hebrew O.T. of the removal of sin, precedence belongs to $\pi\tilde{\iota}\nu$. And we accordingly find that it alone produced an abstract noun. This noun occurs twice only in the O.T., once in the singular Ps. cxxx. 4, $\pi\tilde{\iota}\nu\tilde{\iota}\sigma\mu\delta\varsigma$, \acute{o} $\iota\lambda\alpha\sigma\mu\delta\varsigma$, and once in the plural, Dan. ix. 9, $\pi\tilde{\iota}\nu\tilde{\iota}\sigma\mu\iota$ $\acute{o}\iota$ $\iota\lambda\alpha\sigma\mu\iota$.

(c) *Usage of the Septuagint.*

Turning now to the LXX. we find that the translators recognised the distinction between the two Hebrew words discussed above. On the one hand they accentuated the propitiative connotations of $\pi\tilde{\iota}\nu$ by rendering it, as commonly they did, by $\iota\lambda\acute{\alpha}\sigma\kappa\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$, $\iota\lambda\epsilon\omega\varsigma$ $\gamma\epsilon\nu\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$, or the like, and $\pi\tilde{\iota}\nu\tilde{\iota}$ by $\iota\lambda\alpha\sigma\mu\delta\varsigma$. On the other hand they adopted $\acute{\alpha}\phi\iota\acute{\epsilon}\nu\alpha\iota$ as the normal, though

not as an invariable, rendering of שָׁח. Thus the distinction which in modern versions is obliterated by the indiscriminate use of several words, more or less synonymous in general speech, as equivalent equally of שָׁח and of חָטָא, was maintained, and perhaps even magnified, in the Greek version.

At the same time the close interrelation, in practical piety, of the logically distinct ideas was felt more and more as the study of the now completed Canon became more exact and synoptic.

It was recognised that in order to propitiation of Jehovah,—in order to purification in His sight,—it was necessary that He, the God of Israel, should lift away and remove the burden of guilt and sin; and conversely that such removal of, and quittance from, sin presupposed purification of the heart and propitiation. And thus on the one hand the group ἱλασμός etc., which, somewhat inadequately, represented the Hebrew חָטָא, began henceforth in Judæo-Hellenic literature to connote a great part of the meaning of שָׁח; on the other hand ἀφιέναι (with its congeners), while still containing its classical force and inheriting the heritage too of Hebrew שָׁח, was charged with a new and weighty group of associations—with great part, that is to say, of the specific meaning of חָטָא:—the blending of the two concepts being doubtless assisted by the important passage Num. xiv. 19, where Moses, praying to God, uses first חָטָא and then שָׁח, the former *c.dat. rei* (of the present sin of Israel), the latter *c.dat. pers.* (of their earlier sinning).

In such interchange, or rather involution, of associations there is no confusion, but only integration, of thought. It is by means chiefly of such historical processes in literary expression that the plenitude, the complex unity, of truth is gradually revealed.

That revelation is itself but one moment in the greater process of God's revelation of Himself to man. But the part, like whole, is divine; and we need not scruple to accept, as accordant with the counsel of God, the actual history of the usage—by Jewish historian, prophet or psalmist, and again by Greek philosopher and citizen—of the *words* which in after time He consecrated to the service of His Church.

The verb ἀφιέναι had thus, at the Christian era among Greek-speaking Jews and others conversant with the LXX. version of the Hebrew Scriptures, a far fuller meaning than it—or the rare cognate substantive ἀφεσις—had possessed in Greek of the fourth century B.C., or could have possessed apart from Hebrew influence.

"Αφεσις itself is used occasionally in the LXX. in a general sense of 'loosing,' etc., but never in express connexion with 'sin' or moral states. The only instances in the LXX. which immediately concern the present enquiry are those of Is. lviii. 6, and lxi. 1, cited, the latter clearly, the former apparently, by Christ at Nazareth (*v. inf.* on Lc. iv. 18).

3. Use of ἀφιέναι and ἄφεσις in the New Testament.

The verb ἀφιέναι is used in the N.T. in the following senses :—

- (a) ‘let go’ or ‘dismiss’ : Mt. xiii. 36 *seq.*
- (b) ‘give forth,’ ‘emit,’ : *e.g.* τὴν φωνήν, Mc. xv. 37, τὸ πνεῦμα, Mt. xxvii. 50.
- (c) ‘relinquish,’ ‘abandon’ : *e.g.* πάντα, Mt. xix. 17,
- (d) ‘leave alone,’ ‘let be’ : Mt. xxii. 22, Jo. iv. 52 ; *cf.* Mt. xxiv. 2, Mc. xiii. 2.
- (e) ‘suffer to,’ ‘leave free to,’ followed by acc. and infin. : *e.g.* Mc. x. 14, Lc. xviii. 16 : *cp.* Lc. vi. 42, c. subj.
- (f) ‘leave (unseized) to any one’ (c. acc. rei et dat., pers.), Mt. v. 40, Ἄφες αὐτῷ καὶ τὸ ἱμάτιον.
- (g) in connexion with debts, offences, sins :—c. acc. rei, or c. dat. pers., or both,—‘forgive’ or ‘remit.’

It is with the last mentioned use alone that we are directly concerned.

Ἀφιέναι (c. acc. rei with or without dat. pers., or in pass. c. acc. rei) = ‘forgive,’ ‘remit,’ is found as follows :—

Mt. vi. 12, ὀφειλήματα, vv. 14, 15, παραπτώματα = Lc. xi. 4, ἁμαρτίας, c. dat. ἡμῶν, and then τ. ὀφειλήματα.

Lc. vii. 47. Mt. ix. 5, 6. = Mc. ii. 5, 7, 9 = Lc. v. 20, 21, 23, 24, τὰς ἁμαρτίας.

Mt. xiii. 31 *seq.* = Mc. iii. 28 = Lc. xii. 10.

Mt. xviii. 27, 32. Mc. xi. 25. Lc. xvii. 3, 4
(Lc. xxiii. 34).

Jo. xx. 23. 1 Jo. i. 9 = τ.ἁμαρτίας, ii. 12, αἱ ἁμαρτίαι.
Acts viii. 32. Rom. iv. 7 (cit. from LXX. of
Ps. xxxii. 1). Ja. v. 15.

The instances thus enumerated may conveniently be classed as (*a*) Synoptic, (*b*) Johannine, (*c*) in other books.

The last class (*c*) contains only three instances in all, of which one, the sole Pauline example, is a quotation, so that the verb in this sense may be described as non-Pauline.

The *Synoptic* instances (not counting parallel recurrences) are *seven*; they are, however, preceded in the evangelic history by *two* groups of instances of the noun ἁφesis (v. infr.). The seven are :—

- (iii) in the words and institution of the Lord's Prayer : Mt. vi. 12 *seq.* = Lc. xi. 4; *cf.* Mc. xi. 25.
- (iv) in the history of the healing of the paralytic : Mt. ix. 2 *seq.* = Mc ii. 5 *seq.* = Lc. v. 20 *seq.*
- (v) in the account of the 'woman which was a sinner (ἁμαρτωλός) in the city' : Lc. vii. 36-50 (four times).
- (vi) in the discourse, recorded by all three Synoptists, concerning pardonable and unpardonable 'blasphemies' and 'sins' : Mt. xii. 31 *seq.* = Mc. iii. 28 *seq.* = Lc. xii. 10.
- (vii *a*) in the parable, peculiar to St. Matthew, of the merciless servant : Mt. xviii. 23-34 ;

(vii *b*) and the injunction concerning forgiveness of a repentant brother : Lc. xvii. 3 *seq.* = Mt. xviii. 21.

(viii) in the words, found in some texts of St. Luke, the first 'Word from the Cross' : Lc. xxiii. 34.

The three instances of the word ἀφιέναι (= 'forgive') in the Gospel and Epistles of St. John form a group by themselves ; namely

(xi) in the 'Great Commission' : Jo. xx. 23, with 1 Jo. i. 9, and ii. 12.

The one instance from the Acts is 'Petrine' and will go with group (xii), while that from St. James stands by itself (xiv).

The substantive ἄφεσις occurs seventeen times in the N.T., including two citations, that is : (a) in the Synoptists in *seven passages*, of which two are parallel 'inter se.,' therefore practically in five passages ; (b) in the Book of Acts *five times* ; (c) in the Pauline Epistles *twice* ; and (d) in the Epistle to the Hebrews *twice*.

The Synoptic occurrences of ἄφεσις are as follows :—

(i) in the 'Benedictus' : Lc. i. 77.

of John's Preaching : Mc. i. 4 = Lc. iii. 3.

(ii) in Christ's exposition of Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth : Lc. iv. 18 (bis), cit. from LXX. of Is. lviii. 6, lxi. 1.

(ad vi. *supra*) in the discourse on βλασφημία : Mc. iii. 29.

(ix) at the Last Supper : Mt. xxvi. 27.

- (x) after the Resurrection—concerning preaching to all the nations, in the Name of Christ, of ‘repentance and forgiveness of sins’: *Lc.* xxiv. 47.

In the Book of Acts *ἄφεσις*—always with gen. *ἁμαρτιῶν*—occurs—

- (xii) thrice in the preaching of St. Peter: *Acts* ii. 38, v. 31, x. 43;
 (xiii) twice in the preaching of St. Paul: *xiii.* 38 (at Pisidian Antioch), *xxvi.* 18 (before Agrippa).

It occurs also twice in Pauline Epistles: *Eph.* i. 7, *Col.* i. 14.

- (xv) twice in the Epistle to the Hebrews: *Heb.* ix. 22—*οὐ γίνεται ἄφεσις*; x. 18—*ὅπου δὲ ἄφεσις τούτων* (*sc. τ. ἁμαρτιῶν κ. τ. ἀνομιῶν*).

It will be observed that the noun *ἄφεσις* is not used by St. John.

4. *The conception of Forgiveness deduced from the usage of the New Testament.*

The essential characteristics of 'forgiveness' must be gathered primarily from the language of Christ Himself as recorded in the Gospels : but secondary evidence may be obtained from the statements, in respect of forgiveness, made by the Evangelists or Apostles who had received the teaching of Christ. No other, or later, evidence is admissible.

Combining, in one view, the occurrences of the verb ἀφιέναι and the noun ἄφεσις, we obtain in all fifteen passages or groups of passages demanding separate examination, viz. :

- (i) passages relating to the mission of John the Baptist ;
- (ii-x) certain utterances of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself regarding 'forgiveness'—preserved by the Synoptic Evangelists ;
- (xi) the single express utterance of the Lord on 'forgiveness' recorded by St. John, together with two passages which present St. John's own teaching¹ ;
- (xii) the teaching of St. Peter ;
- (xiii) the teaching of St. Paul ;

¹ After much hesitation I have placed the Teaching of St. John, undivided, next to the Synoptic records of the words of Christ, chiefly in order not to separate Jo. xx. 23 from Lc. xxiv. 47 (v. inf.). But in the progressive history of Apostolic doctrine the personal teaching of St. John comes latest and should be studied last of all.

- (xiv) the teaching of St. James ;
- (xv) the teaching of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

(i) *Forgiveness and the Mission of John the Baptist.*

(a) Lc. i. 77 ; (b) Mc. i. 4 = Lc. iii. 3.

(a) The first recorded mention of 'forgiveness' in direct connexion with the Advent of the Saviour of the World is found in the 'Song of Zacharias' and relates to the functions of the great forerunner, then an infant newly born. In the Annunciation to Joseph (Mt. i. 21) the Angel of the Lord had declared that the Child to be born of Mary should '*save* His people from their sins' ; but 'forgiveness' is not there explicitly mentioned, however in aftertime it may have been seen to be implicit in the idea of salvation from sin. Forgiveness and Salvation, though closely interrelated, are not convertible terms—a reflection which excludes from the

¹In the following observations on the 'Benedictus' I have not thought it necessary to discuss the authenticity of the Song. In any case, and even on the most adverse hypothesis in respect of its authenticity, it must have existed as a song, by whomsoever composed, at a date prior to the construction of our 'Gospel according to St. Luke,' and must have been regarded by the author of that Gospel as a fit prelude to the account which he followed of the Birth of Jesus Christ. Even if it could be shown, therefore, that the song did not really come down (in writing or by oral transmission) from Zacharias to the author of these chapters of the Gospel of St. Luke, this would not involve the withdrawal of anything here asserted or inferred, except the attribution to Zacharias of the origination (in literature) of the phrase 'forgiveness of sins.' But, in fact, it never can be shown that Zacharias could not have composed the Song.

foreground of our enquiry this and every other declaration in which salvation only, and not forgiveness also, is named.

The words of the 'Benedictus,' which thus usher in the evangelic doctrine of Forgiveness, present the idea in full connexion at once with the fulfilment of prophecy, with the life-work of the child born to Zacharias, and with that 'salvation' of the people of God, of which he, John, was to 'give knowledge'—'Yea and thou, child, shalt be called Prophet of the Most High, for thou shalt be a forerunner "before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways," to give knowledge of salvation to His people (γνῶσιν σωτηρίας τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ) *in forgiveness of their sins* (ἐν ἀφέσει ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν).'

'Forgiveness of sins' is here regarded as the environment, and by consequence as an elemental condition, of salvation—of that salvation which, forecast by the ancient prophets as the term and positive issue of the reiterated judgments and punishments divinely inflicted upon Israel, has been depicted in the foregoing strophes of this song as now on the eve of being realised in time. The forgiveness itself appears here unconditioned by any previous qualification of the recipients. That the recipients should serve the Lord 'in holiness and righteousness' is presented as a resultant privilege, and not as a previous condition, of the deliverance promised to the seed of Abraham (vv. 73-75), of which deliverance or salvation, effected ἐν ἀφέσει ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν, the motive and basis is found in 'the tenderness of mercy of our God' (διὰ σπλάγχνα

ἐλεοῦς θεοῦ ἡμῶν). Of that tender mercy, or ‘heart of mercy,’ the immediate external evidence in the rising from on high of a certain brightness or light of dawn, giving light to those who before had no light, and enabling all alike to find the way of peace.¹

Without attempting to analyse fully the pregnant language of this hymn, we may observe that it contains in germ a great part of the whole evangelic doctrine of forgiveness.

It is a question not easy to answer from what source Zacharias may have derived the expression ἐν ἀφύσει ἁμαρτιῶν. St. Luke states that Zacharias was ‘filled with the Holy Spirit’ and spoke as a prophet in this song. But such declarations do not supersede for us the duty of ascertaining, where we are able, the human antecedents of the *phraseology* employed by the inspired prophet. Neglect of this duty can only lead to misapprehension of the significance of prophecy, of ‘prophecy’ whose ‘spirit’ is always ‘the testimony of Jesus.’²

The exact phrase ‘forgiveness of sins’ does not occur in the O.T. Is it possible to point to any one verse of the LXX. which was especially in the mind of Zacharias? The number of places in which ἀφιέναι and the particular word ἁμαρτίαι occur in conjunction is small, apparently two only,³ Ps. xxv. 18 and Is. xxxiii. 24.

¹ τοῦ κατευθύναι τοὺς πόδας ἡμῶν εἰς ὁδὸν εἰρήνης.

² Apoc. xix. 10. ἡ γὰρ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ ἐστὶν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας.

³ Ps. xxv. 18. καὶ ἄφες πάσας τὰς ἁμαρτίας μου. Is. xxxiii. 24. ἀφέθη γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἡ ἁμαρτία.

In the former ('forgive all my sins') the word *ἀμαρτίας* represents, as normally, Heb. *חַטִּיִּת*, in the latter (E.V. 'shall be forgiven their iniquity') it translates Heb. *עֲוֹן*. It may perhaps be conjectured that both these verses were present to the mind of Zacharias, though not necessarily to the exclusion of other passages, where one or other of the words here conjoined occur, *e.g.* Ex. xxxiv. 7, Nu. xiv. 19, Dan. ix. 19, and the words in the Prayer of Solomon (1 K. viii. 30 *seq.*) that close each rhythmic period of the prayer and then finally recur in the expanded form, 'then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling-place, and maintain their cause, and *forgive* thy people that have *sinned* against thee, and all their *transgressions* wherein they have *transgressed* against thee' (v. 50).

But as the combination *ἄφεσις ἀμαρτιῶν* itself is first found in the 'Benedictus,' it may further be believed, in the absence of an earlier instance, that it owes its origin to Zacharias.

Religious originality, like all originality, consists largely in the application of the treasure of the past in new combinations to the interpretation of the present and the future.

(b) The conception thus first realised in terms by the father of the Baptist formed a predominant and final element in the preaching of the Baptist himself.

John came 'proclaiming a baptism of repentance unto remission of sins.' The formula is identical in St. Mark (i. 4) and St. Luke (iii. 3). St. Matthew, while having in common with the other Synoptists the

word *μετάνοια* (iii. 8), anticipated by the cognate verb *μετανοεῖτε* (v. 3), does not specify ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν as the object and consequence of the repentance enjoined. He states indeed that the people received baptism of John ‘confessing their sins,’¹ and he describes John as asking Pharisees and Sadducees who had suggested to them (ὑπέδειξεν) to fly from the coming—the impending—wrath, and as warning them that their repentance, to be genuine, must be evidenced by change of life and practice.² This implies that, as the other Evangelists say plainly, a true repentance will bring removal of guilt.

¹ ἐξομολογούμενοι τὰς ἁμαρτίας.

² The nature of the required fruits—the καρποὶ ἀξιοὶ τῆς μετανοίας—is illustrated and exemplified by St. Luke (iii. 11, 15).

Forgiveness in the Synoptic records.(ii.) *Christ at Nazareth.*—Lc. iv. 16-22.

That which is probably the earliest¹ recorded occurrence of the word *ἄφεσις* in the Personal Ministry of Christ presents a problem of a very special character.

In the synagogue at Nazareth our Lord expounded a passage, or passages, of the book of the prophet Isaiah, whether with or without a continuous paraphrase, in Greek or Aramaic, of the Hebrew lection on which the Discourse was based.

St. Luke, who makes no pretence of giving the entire lection or a continuous portion of it (εὗρεν [τον] τόπον οὗ ἦν γεγραμμένον), cites, from the LXX., Is. lxi. 1, omitting (according to the best MSS.) the words *ἰασασθαι τοὺς συντετριμμένους τὴν καρδίαν*,—then a clause which (in the O. T.) occurs only in Is. lviii. 6 (*ἀποστείλαι τεθρανσμένους ἐν ἄφεσει*), and then a clause (*κηρύξαι ἐν ἑαυτὸν Κυρίου δεκτὸν*) which occurs integrally in Is. lxi. 2 (St. Luke substituting *κηρύξαι* for *καλέσαι* of our text of the LXX.) but is indirectly implied in the closing words² of lviii. 5.

The most probable interpretation of these data seems to be that the Lord Himself took as the basis of His discourse words from Is. lxi. 1, together with a portion

¹ I have ventured to assume the early date of the visit to Nazareth, and that the 'works' referred to in Lc. iv. 23, as previously wrought in Capernaum are, all or most, miracles not recorded by the Synoptists.

² עָבַד of lxi. 1 echoes עָבַד of lviii. 7.

of ch. lviii., with which in any case the exegesis of ch. lxi., whether in the Hebrew or in the Greek text, is closely connected.

This citation, or complex of citations,¹ contains the word *ἄφεσις* twice ; but in neither case does the word bear the specific sense ‘forgiveness’ or directly involve the idea of sin to be remitted ; and in neither case does it in the text of the LXX. represent the Hebrew *סלח* or other word signifying removal of guilt. In Is. lxi. 1 *ἄφεσιν* represents Heb. *לח*, which appears to be well rendered ‘liberty’ in the English versions ; while in lviii. 6 the words *ἀπόστειλλε—ἐν ἄφέσει* (thrown in Lc. iv. 18 into the infinitive) represent the Hebrew *וַתִּפְּדֵם* = E. V. ‘let go—free.’

That physical release is the immediate, as it is the literal, meaning of *ἄφεσις* in both clauses is thus unquestionable. But the purport and essence of the discourse spoken by Jesus at Nazareth was, as St. Luke expressly says, that the Scripture which He expounded was receiving its full and final realisation in their own day and even as He spoke. Then, as the words of grace riveted their attention, there, as He sat before them, His fellow-villagers, in the house of worship, Jesus of Nazareth adopted to Himself, and re-uttered as from Himself, the language of ‘Isaiah.’ It was

¹ πνεῦμα Κυρίου ἐπ’ ἐμέ.

οὐ εἵνεκεν ἔχρισέν με εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς,
ἀπέσταλκέν με κηρύξαι αἰχμαλωτοῖς ἄφεσιν καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν
ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἄφέσει,
κηρύξαι ἐνιαυτὸν Κυρίου δεκτὸν.

Himself finally—though not necessarily to the exclusion of the Hebrew prophet in his generation—it was Himself Whom the Lord Jehovah had ‘anointed’ as His Christ to bear glad tidings to the poor and humble—had ‘sent forth’ as His Angel to proclaim release to the captives, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a jubilee, a year of grace from Jehovah.

Now, waiving every possible point of controversy, it is certain that He who claimed these functions to Himself, released no captives from actual dungeons, no slaves from the oppression of human taskmasters. It follows that the ἀφεις which He thus presently claimed and offered to accomplish was a moral and spiritual, sometimes also a psychical and physiological, release—release not from particular concrete prisons and oppressors, but from the powers of evil as they manifested themselves in the parallel forms of vice, demoniac possession, and disease. Release from the power of evil is not indeed identically forgiveness of sins, any more than the idea presented by Heb. יר is identical with that presented by נשׁו. But such release is always either a complementary aspect of forgiveness, or typical of it; the former when the release is purely spiritual, the latter (*e.g.*) in the healing of the paralytic (v. inf.). Ἀφεις denotes any process of releasing or dismissing: it may therefore denote (*a*) the *releasing* of a prisoner or sufferer from his bonds or from any evil, or (*b*) the *dismissal* from an organism of anything that mars, hurts, or defiles it. If now the person ‘released’—the *object* of ἀφεις in the first sense—coincide with the

organism which is the *scene*, not the object, of ἀφεις in the second sense, with the organism, that is, whose impurity is 'dismissed' and put away, it is obvious that in this special case the one ἀφεις will be strictly the counterpart of the other.

(iii) *Forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer.*Mt. vi. 9-15. Lc. xi. 1-3. (*cf.* Mc. xi. 25).

The petitions of the Prayer taught by Christ to His disciples are, in St. Matthew's Gospel, six or, regarding the last as two-fold, seven in number; and they fall into two trilogies, or into a trilogy and tetralogy, of which the former has special reference to Our Father, Whom in prayer we approach, the latter to us men who pray. Of the latter the first petition is for daily sustenance, the third for deliverance from risk of temptation and the power of evil; while intermediate between these is the petition for the remission of our debts:—

καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν,
ὥς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν.

The use of the term 'debts' (ὀφειλήματα) is remarkable. The word recurs but once in the N.T. (Rom. iv. 4), where κατὰ ὀφειλημα is \propto κατὰ χάριν, and there not in a context which makes the word equivalent to ἀμάρτημα. The word ὀφειλή, however, occurs thrice in the N.T., viz. twice in Epistles of St. Paul, Rom. xiii. 7, ἀπόδοτε οὖν πᾶσι τὰς ὀφειλάς, and 1 Cor. vii. 3—of debts, which, according to the Apostolic injunction, are to be paid, without any mention of a correlative duty of remitting such debts absolutely,—and once in the Gospel of St. Matthew, in a passage (xviii. 32) to be examined below.

St. Luke, in his brief summary of the Prayer, uses

ἁμαρτίας in place of the ὀφειλήματα of St. Matthew. And the question naturally arises: Is the presence of this particular Greek word in our Gospel of St. Matthew accidental, that is to say, a mere matter of arbitrary linguistic choice, or does it indicate the use by our Lord in His original or final institution of the Prayer, of some word other than that which elsewhere in the Gospels is represented by ἁμαρτία?

The solution of this problem is complicated to some extent by two other undecided questions, the one concerning the original form and language of St. Matthew's Gospel, the other the question whether Greek or Aramaic was the language habitually spoken by the Lord and His disciples. If, as is commonly (and, on the whole, with good reason) assumed, the Lord spoke in Aramaic, the proximate questions are: Did He on this occasion use some word other than that which He used, for example, to the paralytic and, if so, is the difference necessarily significant? Or again, is the variation ὀφειλήματα--ἁμαρτίαι to be traced back only to an Aramaic original, oral or written, of St. Matthew's Gospel, and not to the *ipsissima verba* of the Lord? Amid these elements of uncertainty the onus of proof rests upon those who deny that such variation in the same author, or in parallel accounts of the same or similar events by different authors, indicates primitive and significant variation or complexity of expression. In default of proof to the contrary we are then entitled to assume (*a*) that the Lord did not in the Prayer (Mt. vi. 22) use the same word as that which He used

to the paralytic (Mt. ix. 2 *seq.*) and further (*b*) that He had a reason for not using the same word.

The legitimacy of this position is confirmed by consideration of the sentence immediately following the Prayer in the text of St. Matthew. As if in justification of that petition in the Prayer which, by reason of the self-restraining limitation appended, might fall with most startling impressiveness upon the ears of the disciples, the Master, having ended all the words of the Prayer, adds the comment: 'For (truly) if ye forgive men their trespasses (*παραπτώματα*), your Heavenly Father shall forgive you also; but if ye forgive not men'—your fellow-men—'[their trespasses] neither shall your Father forgive your trespasses.'

The purport of this declaration as a whole will demand subsequent attention; the point to be now noticed is the substitution of *παραπτώματα* for the *ὀφειλήματα* of the Prayer. To the casual observer the change might seem of itself to prove decisively that different Greek words are used by St. Matthew quite synonymously. The 'trespasses' of vv. 14, 15 are, it may be urged, surely identical with the 'debts' of v. 12. They are in substance identical: they are, however, named by names which are not identical in connotation, but express each one aspect only of a double-faced fact. That which is objectively a 'debt' is subjectively a 'trespass,' 'transgression,' or 'delict'—a relation well expressed by the terminology of the Roman Law, which defined a certain class of acts as 'delicta,' and then recognised as a distinct fact the existence of 'obligationes

ex delicto.' But as in Roman law not every obligation, but only one class, arises from delict, so in any logical classification of actions and duties—so, accordingly, in the lucid deontology of the N.T.—we find that while every trespass is, regarded from the side of the sufferer, a 'debt' incurred by the doer, not every debt is (or, in the language of jurisprudence, 'arises from') a 'trespass.' The debts which St. Paul instructs his converts to 'pay to all men' (Rom. xiii. 7) are, if we may pursue the jural analogy, contractual or quasi-contractual debts. Continued default to pay such debts may constitute a delict, the moment of transition being determined by circumstances which need not here be investigated; and such delict or trespass produces or constitutes an obligation or debt of the kind to which the passage before us relates. Such debt—debt which springs from, or is subjectively, delict or trespass of some sort—and such alone, is essentially 'a sin.' The word *ἀμάρτημα* is thus an absolute, though still concrete, term for that which, viewed in special relation to the wrong-doer, is a 'trespass' or 'transgression' (*παράπτωμα*), and viewed in special relation to the person wronged a 'debt' (*ὀφείλημα*). It is, then, not surprising that St. Luke, who palpably gives a summary rather than a detailed account of this and other parts of the Sermon on the Mount, should have employed a word which actually embraces and blends in one focus the reciprocally complementary words recorded by St. Matthew. Nor is there any reason to deny that this third and comprehensive term may either at the original institution

or at some later confirmation of this section of the great Discourse, containing the Prayer, have been authorised by the lips of Christ Himself.

It is noteworthy that the word *ἁμαρτίαι* in Lc. xi. 4 occurs in the first clause only of the petition. 'Forgive us our *sins*; for we also forgive every one that is *in debt* to us.' In St. Matthew, on the other hand, although in the Prayer itself it is simply 'our debtors' whom we declare that we 'have forgiven,' in the words which follow the Prayer the text is 'If ye forgive men their trespasses.' The variation is very significant. *Ἀμάρτημα* (and therefore *ἁμαρτίαι* and, *a fortiori*, the abstract *ἁμαρτία*), as contrasted with *ὀφείλημα* and *παραπτῶμα*, has been described as an absolute term. More exactly, perhaps, it might have been described as relative to God only. In other words, of sin as sin God only has cognizance: God only can forgive sin. All that man is required to do—all that man *can* do—is to forgive to his *debtors* the *trespasses* (or delicts) by them committed to his detriment. That is to say, he is able and he is required to regard the *debtor* as though he had not committed a trespass against *him* the sufferer, to regard the *act of trespass* as though it did not, as in jurisprudence it does, live on as an objective debt.

Men, as they hope for forgiveness, are required to forgive; *not* to call unrighteous conduct righteous or to refrain from remonstrance or indignation, but simply to listen to the prayer of the suppliant debtor and forgive.

(iv) '*Forgiveness*' at the restoration of the Paralytic.

Mt. ix. 2 *seq.* = Mc. ii. 5 *seq.* = Lc. v. 20 *seq.*

The miracle of the healing of the paralytic at Capernaum is recorded by all three Synoptic Evangelists. It is in some respects the most decisive of all miracles. In it first is set forth *explicitly* the didactic and evidential purpose of the miracles wrought by Christ. The friends of the paralytic had brought him with much labour and patient perseverance into the Presence of the great Teacher. That trustful constancy of purpose displayed by the sick man's bearers and presumably, so far as his weakness allowed, by the sick man himself is regarded by the Christ as essentially faith. Yet He gives them in the first instant not what was sought. The man through his friends sought healing: the Christ bestowed forgiveness—'Thy sins, My child, are forgiven thee' (Mc. ii. 6). The words provoked the jealous religiosity of the Scribes and Pharisees who sat in the building watching the Prophet of Nazareth; and they said one to another: 'Tis blasphemy he speaks; who can forgive sins save God alone?' The theology of the comment was sound—God only can forgive sins. The inference, which they drew, was false. It arbitrarily excluded the alternative hypothesis that the speaker of the words of absolution might be a messenger of God (ἄγγελος κυρίου), authorised,

like 'Isaiah' (xl. 1) and other of the prophets of old, to declare *in the name of God*, at a particular time, remission of the sins of an individual or of the nation. The dishonesty of their conclusion was probed by the words of Jesus, which follow : ' Whether of the two is the easier thing ' to say to the paralytic—the safer thing to say to such an one lightly—that which I *then* said, ' Thy sins are forgiven thee,' or this which I *now* say, that ye may know that the Son of Man hath indeed authority to *forgive sins* also, ' Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.' The immediate restoration of the paralytic was proof that He, who had power to effect this release of a prisoner from the bondage of his hopeless infirmity, had likewise power and authority on the earth in the name of Jehovah to dismiss and set aside the sins which bound and clogged that sick man's heart, as they bound and clogged the hearts of other men whose bodies were not thus fettered.

St. Matthew's record of this great work of power is immediately followed by the record of his own call, of that call which, rising from his seat of custom, he obeyed so readily ; and it might seem as if he had been an eye-witness of that scene, and had felt with convincing certainty of faith that the moral proof of the Divine legation of the ' Son of Man ' was complete and of peremptory weight. And the story of his call is followed again by that of the feast, which was made in his house, when many ' tax-gatherers and sinners ' were of the company. The ' scribes and the Pharisees,' having tauntingly asked the disciples of Jesus why

their Master kept such company (Mc. ii. 1), elicited from the Master an unexpected and decisive answer : 'They that are whole need no healer, but they that are sick. It is the sick and not the sound, the weak and not the strong,¹ who need a healer. I came not to call *righteous* men, but *sinful* men,² to repentance.'

Self-satisfaction is thus declared a bar to the reception of that voice which invites the sinner to repent, bestows remission of sins, and looses the bonds of disease.

Consistently with the usage noticed in the preceding group of passages the word ἀμαρτία is found without variation in all the accounts of this event. It is no longer a question of 'debts' or of 'trespasses,' no longer a question of wrong-doing regarded relatively to one or other of two human parties or even relatively to men considered as children of their Father Who, being in the heavens, deigns yet to act towards them, His children, as they severally shall have acted towards their fellow-men. It is 'sins'—wrong-doing relatively to God as God, wrong-doing in itself—which the Son of Man, sent from God, had authority to forgive. It is the sinner viewed as a sinner, not merely as a debtor, that He was come to call 'to repentance' and to save.

¹ οἱ ἰσχυρότεροι. Mt. ix. 22 and Mc. ii. 17. οἱ ὑγιαίνοντες L.c. v 30, *seq.*

² It is only in St. Luke that the words εἰς μετάνοιαν are added.

(v) *The woman which was a sinner.*Lc. vii. 36-50, *seq.*

The account of the ‘woman which was a sinner’ (ἁμαρτωλὸς) in the city’ (apparently the city of Capernaum) is peculiar to St. Luke. Here again, and yet more emphatically, it is sin—‘the sins, the many sins’—of the suppliant which are forgiven (vv. 45-49).

(1) It is noteworthy that here first remission of sins is expressly connected with the existence *in the person forgiven* of ‘faith’ (ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέ σε). In the case of the paralytic, as we have seen, it was apparently the conjoint faith of the bearers and the sufferer himself consenting to their act, which was accepted as adequate. In the case of the reprobate woman it is a solitary personal faith which ‘saves.’

(2) Of this her faith, moreover, the critical sign is open penitence and self-humiliation. In the case of the paralysed man the faith, which brought as its first reward forgiveness of sins, itself had reference primarily, and in the intention of the petitioners, to the expected cure of the bodily ailment. In the case of the sinful woman the faith, which brought forgiveness, had sought forgiveness only from the first: and we may well assume that in her case no other or less central faith would have been genuine or potent to save.

(3) And thirdly it is noteworthy that here first in the records of Christ's ministry is forgiveness of sins directly linked with the idea of *salvation*. The angel of the Lord, who appeared to Joseph at Nazareth before the journey to Bethlehem, had announced that the name of Mary's Child, that should presently be born, should be called Jesus : 'for He it is that shall save His people from their sins.' The note there struck in the evangelic story is here first clearly heard again. He Who bids to repentance, He Who grants remission of sins, brings also salvation. Salvation is not forgiveness ; but it includes and transcends forgiveness.

(vi) *Blasphemy of the Spirit.*

The next group of passages demanding consideration consists of the parallel sections—

Mt. xii. 31, 32 = Mc. iii. 28-30 = Lc. xii. 10.

A first question which arises on a study of this crucial utterance is as to the exact relation in which ‘sin’ (ἁμαρτία) and ‘sins’ (τὰ ἁμαρτήματα) stand to ‘blasphemy’ (βλασφημία) and ‘blasphemies’ (αἱ βλασφημίαι) respectively. Is ‘blasphemy’ (Mt. xii. 31) a special kind of ‘sin,’ or is it something distinct from and co-ordinate with ‘sin.’ It is difficult to decide confidently. But the former alternative is favoured by the true reading¹ of Mc. iii. 29. The central statement of the discourse is that, whereas in general ‘every kind of sin and blasphemy’ (Mt.), ‘all particular sins and blasphemies’ (Mc.) shall be forgiven, there is one species of ‘blasphemy’ which shall not be forgiven. What then (a) is βλασφημία intrinsically? And what (b) is ἡ τοῦ πνεύματος βλασφημία?

(a) From Mt. xii. 32 *seq.*, compared with Lc. xii. 10, we are entitled to say that βλασφημεῖν εἰς = εἰπεῖν λόγον εἰς = εἰπεῖν λόγον κατὰ (c. gen.): and consequently that ‘blasphemy,’ as here used, is *utterance of thought*, not perhaps necessarily in audible words, *against or in condemnation of a person or spiritual power*. This

¹ ἐνοχός ἐστιν αἰωνίου ἁμαρτήματος.

definition of *βλασφηημία* is confirmed by many of the other contexts in which it occurs in the N.T. (so Eph. iv. 31, Col. iii. 8, etc.), but is not sufficient to include all forms of the thing signified. In such passages as Mt. xxvi. 65, Jo. x. 33 the 'blasphemy' charged appears specifically different from that here defined. There it has a limited and almost technical meaning—'derogation from the honour due to God' (Westcott on Jo. x. 33). But the difference is only specific. Both kinds of 'blasphemy' spring from the same root, and are generically one.

That kind which manifests itself in insolent and contumacious utterance may have for its object of attack either (1) a visible finite individual or society, a man or group of men, or (2) a manifestation, in finite actions, of a transcendental energy.

(1) In the former case, if the person reviled be an ordinary man or society the 'blasphemies,' like common trespasses, are covered by the general rule of forgiveness. And the 'Son of Man' deigns to declare that blasphemy against His own Person shall, like other sin, find forgiveness: thus removing for ever any doubt which might arise after His glorification, whether the sin of those who mocked and reviled Jesus of Nazareth—whether the sin of those who in after time should speak despitefully of Jesus Christ—could ever be forgiven. He Who came with power to forgive sins upon the earth, tells us plainly that blasphemy against Himself shall not be past forgiveness.

(2) But blasphemy may be directed not upon a

finite person, human or Divine,¹ but against a self-manifesting spiritual power. We can with our ordinary faculties grasp at all events the possibility of such a direction of 'blasphemy.' More than this we could not know but for the words of the 'Son of Man' Who was also Son of God. Those words in themselves are unambiguous—'Blasphemy of the Spirit shall not be forgiven': 'Whoso speaketh against the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him either in this world or in the world to come' (Mt. xii. 32); 'Whoso shall have blasphemed against the Holy Spirit, hath not forgiveness eternally, but is involved in eternal sin' (Mc. iii. 29). 'To him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven' (Lc. xii. 10). The doom is definite and absolute—no forgiveness—'it shall not be forgiven.' The words appended by St. Matthew, 'neither in this world nor in the world to come' (οὐτε ἐν τούτῳ τῷ αἰῶνι οὐτε ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι) might perhaps be interpreted as signifying 'Blasphemies uttered in this world shall not be forgiven in this world; and blasphemies uttered in the next world shall not be forgiven in the next world.' But it must be admitted that such an interpretation is strongly discountenanced by the language of St. Mark, οὐκ ἔχει ἄφεσιν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ('for ever—eternally—hath not'), language which, however difficult to interpret clearly, would seem at all events to exclude the particular interpretation above suggested of the words in St.

¹ The Person of Christ, always Divine, is finite in respect of His humanity.

Matthew's Gospel; of which words we may hardly doubt that the formula in St. Mark is a condensation and a legitimate condensation. 'Blasphemy of the Spirit' (ἡ βλασφημία τοῦ πνεύματος) shall not be forgiven. What then is this 'blasphemy'?

(b) St. Mark affords us initial guidance to the solution of this most solemn, and perilously neglected, enquiry. Having recorded the words of Christ in the striking and pregnant form οὗτος δ' ἂν βλασφημήσῃ εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον οὐκ ἔχει ἄφεσιν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, ἀλλὰ ἐνοχὸς ἔσται αἰωνίου ἁμαρτήματος, he adds an explanatory comment: 'because they were saying "He hath an unclean spirit."' It was then clear to St. Mark, may we not say to St. Peter, that the words of Christ concerning blasphemy against the Holy Spirit had been uttered in direct reference to words previously spoken by the Pharisees. The actual sentence, 'He *hath* Beelzebul,' is attested by St. Mark alone; but all three Evangelists attest the additional and more definite assertion: 'In the power of the prince of the devils¹ doth He cast out the devils' (ἐν τῷ ἄρχοντι τ. δαιμονίων ἐκβάλλει τ.δ.). St. Matthew and St. Luke appear to blend in one the two expressions of calumnious hate: Οὗτος οὐκ ἐκβάλλει τὰ δαιμόνια εἰ μὴ ἐν τῷ Βεελζεβουλ ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων (Mat. xii. 24); 'Ἐν Βεελζεβουλ τῷ ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων ἐκβάλλει τὰ δαιμόνια (Lc. xi. 15). St. Matthew and St. Mark concur in presenting these words of the Pharisees as following immediately upon the miraculous cure by Christ of a sufferer exceptionally afflicted (δαιμονιζόμενον τυφλὸν καὶ κωφὸν, Mt. δ. κωφὸν, Mc.),

¹ i.e. the unclean spirits—the demons.

while from St. Matthew alone we gather that the miracle was in the eyes of the multitude the culmination of a long series of similar miracles performed shortly after that scene in the synagogue when on the sabbath Jesus had healed the 'withered hand' and had incurred the deadly hatred of the silenced and baffled Pharisees. While they had been taking counsel with their political opponents, the Herodians, to destroy Him—a prelude to those later coalitions which procured the Crucifixion—the Christ, as though because His time was short, had been healing *all* the many sufferers (Mt. xii. 27) who sought to Him. That there was some strange, unique grandeur either in the character or in the number of the cures wrought at this time is manifest from the supreme amazement which they elicited. It is at this point that the Apostle Matthew applies to his Lord the prophetic language of Isaiah, 'Behold my Servant (ὁ παῖς μου) whom I have chosen, my Beloved, in Whom my soul is well pleased.' It is to this point in the history that we must also, probably, refer the statement of Mc. iii. 20, that 'His friends' (οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ), by whom we can hardly but understand His kindred, hearing how the house in which He dwelt was thronged and filled by the ever-returning crowd, perhaps already saluting Him as 'Son of David,' came to secure His Person or to restrain Him, saying to themselves that He was out of His mind (ὅτι ἐξέστη). Completely as they misinterpreted the crisis, a crisis it truly was in the Great Ministry. That final miracle of the series just enacted had brought matters to a decisive issue.

The people said, 'Is not this the Son of David' (Mt. xii. 22). The Pharisees, hearing, said, 'He hath a devil,'¹ 'It is by Beelzebul, prince of the devils that He casteth out devils thus.' The assertion was not an expression of momentary spite or passion. It was the deliberate enunciation of a theory devised in secret conclave by those best able to know the falsehood of it, and now propounded in presence of the enthusiastic multitude as an authorised alternative to the inference which that simple folk had drawn from the works of power wrought before their eyes.

Examination of the circumstances of this crucial episode discloses, therefore, not only the fact that the actual language of the Pharisees stood in some near relation to 'blasphemy of the Spirit,' but also the fact that that language expressed an attitude advisedly adopted with the object of causing certain great and notable works of mercy to be regarded by the people as emanating from the prince of the powers of evil : whose personality, it may be observed, is here assumed alike by the Pharisees, by the people, and by Christ Himself. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the sin of the Pharisees, or of such of them as consciously devised and propounded this theory of the diabolic origin of Christ's works of love and mercy, was essentially and generically 'blasphemy of the Spirit,' or, at the least, that it was a sin which, consciously persisted in after the eschatological revelation now granted, would become 'blasphemy of the Spirit.'

¹ *i.e.*, an unclean—evil—spirit,—a demon.

Yet it does not follow that the particular language here condemned exhausts the possible forms in which that fatal stage of thought might manifest itself. We seek for some further clue to the determination of the nature of 'blasphemy of the Spirit,' and we seem to find it most immediately in the context of St. Luke, who, less regardful than St. Matthew of chronological sequence, here, as often, combines in one context utterances of the Lord really and essentially interrelated, though not necessarily originated at the same time and place.¹

During the period of extreme popular enthusiasm, which was the occasion of the episode last discussed, the Lord 'began to say to His disciples first "Beware of the leaven, which is hyprocrisy, of the Pharisees"': Ἐν οἷς ἐπισυναχθεῖσιν τῶν μυριάδων τοῦ ὄχλου, ὥστε καταπατεῖν ἀλλήλους, ἤρξατο λέγειν πρὸς τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ πρώτον· Προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς ἀπὸ τῆς ζύμης, ἥτις ἐστὶν ὑπόκρισις, τῶν Φαρισαίων. The warning is followed in the text of St. Luke by another, the relation of which to the former is not at once obvious: 'But nothing is covered up which shall not be revealed (uncovered), nor hidden

¹ This view of St. Luke's method by no means excludes, but rather defines and illustrates, the supposition that the Lord frequently recalled to the minds of His followers in new circumstances the central purport of an earlier discourse either by repetition of a pregnant saying word for word or by a summary condensation of the whole in a new form. The passage before us is in this regard singularly significant: 'Meanwhile, He began to say to His disciples *first* "Beware, etc."' What does *πρώτον* mean? Does it mean 'to His *disciples* first, before He spoke to the multitude,' or rather 'it was *now* at this stage that He first began warning His disciples to beware.

which shall not be made known.' Other eschatological monitions follow, and then, after that concerning the consequences of confession or denial of Christ before men, comes the declaration concerning 'blasphemy against the Holy Spirit'; which again is followed by the injunction, 'But when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, be not anxious how or what ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for *the Holy Spirit* shall teach you in that very hour what ye ought to say.'

The whole series of warnings is dominated, we may say, by two leading themes: (1) the character of the Pharisees; (2) the Holy Spirit.

(α) Of the former—the Pharisaic leaven—the disciples are bidden to 'beware.' That leaven 'is hypocrisy.' There 'shall be' a revealing of all secrets; of all that lies hidden beneath the veil of pretence or of unreality—an unmasking of hypocrisy.

(β) The Pharisees—the hypocrites—may slay the body of him who is not of their leaven. But there is a more terrible punishment than physical death, and there is One who hath authority to cast into Gehenna. The leaven of the Pharisees (we seem to be here indirectly told) involves the soul in *this* peril; while God knows and will defend His own.

(γ) He who now before men confesses shall then before the angels of God be confessed by the Son of Man: he who now denies shall then be denied by Him.

(δ) Blasphemy against the Son of Man shall indeed be forgiven: not so blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

(ε) That Holy Spirit will teach and support in the hour of persecution the victims of official and judicial inquisition.

It can hardly be doubted that in the mind of St. Luke and, therefore, on the view which in this essay is taken of the nature of the Gospels, in the recollection of those eye witnesses (*αὐτοπταί*) who were his sources (i. 2), there was a fundamental equivalence between the things thus successively opposed to God—the Son of Man—the Holy Spirit : in other words between

- { (a) the leaven, which is hypocrisy, of the Pharisees ;
- { (b) the spirit of those who would kill the bodies of certain not of their spirit ;
- { (c) denial of the Son of Man ;
- { (d) malediction of the Son of Man ;
- { (e) blasphemy of the Holy Spirit ;
- { (f) persecution, religious and civil, of followers of the Son of Man.

The particular distribution of topics here tentatively offered is perhaps arbitrary : it is inessential to the conclusion which seems deducible from the actual data. That conclusion is the essential identity of ‘blasphemy of the Spirit’ (*ἡ βλασφημία τοῦ πνεύματος*) with ‘the leaven, which is hypocrisy, of the Pharisees’ (*ἡ ζύμη, ἣ τις ἐστὶν ὑπόκρισις, τῶν Φαρισαίων*), and, as we may perhaps venture to add, of both with an as yet nameless spirit of malice expressing itself in the desire to destroy the innocent.

The former identification, at all events, if not indeed the latter also, is supported by the argument of the

conversation between Christ and the Pharisees recorded by St. John in the eighth chapter of his Gospel (viii. 31-59). The stages of that argument may be provisionally exhibited as follows :

v. 37. 'I know that ye are (after the flesh) seed of Abraham, as ye claim, but ye *seek to kill Me*, because My word finds no free course (ὁὐ χωρεῖ) in you ; therefore ye would *kill Me*.'

v. 40. 'Me, a man who have spoken to you *the truth*, the truth which I heard from God.' *This* Abraham did not : he did not seek to kill God's messenger or any that spake God's truth to him : therefore ye are not spiritually children of Abraham.

v. 41. 'No, the works which ye do are the works of *your Father*' ; they disclose your spiritual paternity.

v. 44. 'Ye are (sons) of *the devil* ; *he* is your father ; and it is the lusts of him, your father, that ye will to do.'

'He is, and ever was from the beginning, a murderer : and he stands not in the truth' : falsehood is his environing medium : for 'there is not any truth in him.'

'Whenever he speaketh falsehood, he speaketh of his own, out of his own proper treasure ; for he is *a liar* (ψευστῆς), and the father—the prime author—of lying' (falsehood).

v. 45-47. 'As for Me, it is *because* I speak *truth* that ye believe me not, the truth of God which I, being from God, have heard and tell to you, and ye, not being from God, will not hear.'

¹ αὐτοῦ = τοῦ ψεύδους.

‘Were we not right?’ the Pharisees here rejoin. ‘Did we not rightly say, “Thou art possessed”?’¹

From the sequence of accusatory revelations here briefly analysed—a sequence which, it may be remarked, is itself a fact and indisputable, even if the details of the foregoing analysis be disputed—we gather the following transcendental verities :

- (a) The devil is essentially a liar, and the father and prime author of all falsehood (τοῦ ψεύδους).
- (β) The devil is, and has been from all time, a murderer—a ‘killer of men’ (ἀνθρωποκτόνος).
- (γ) The devil is spiritual father of the disputant Pharisees, who themselves disbelieve Christ (the Son of Man) *because He tells them the truth*, and seek to kill Him for the same reason.

It is impossible not to recognise how, here at all events, the spirit *which loves falsehood rather than truth*, and the spirit of *murderous hatred of Him Who came from God* and speaks God’s truth, are identified, or at least placed in the most intimate co-ordination, twin offspring of one evil personality, two aspects of one malevolent type of thought, realised, or in the way to be realised *in the hearts of the Pharisees*, and therefore also in their teaching.

Even more evident is it that this type of thought is none other than that which in the Synoptic Gospels is called ‘blasphemy of the Spirit.’ Of *that* we were told that, unlike all other forms of sin, it is beyond forgiveness, clearly because, as St. Mark’s record explicitly

¹ ‘hast an unclean spirit’ (δαίμονιον ἔχεις).

intimates, it is itself eternal, and therefore immutable, incurable. Similarly of *this*, the condition of heart of the Pharisees at Jerusalem who said to the Lord ‘Thou hast a devil’¹ (the very thing which the Pharisees in Galilee had said *of* Him), St. John tells us in effect that it was unique ; for it was to these same Pharisees that, as the earlier verses of his record testify, the Lord uttered the unexampled warning : ‘*Ye shall die* in your sin.’ Can we doubt that *this* is the ‘sin unto death’ of which the same Apostle speaks in his Epistle as alone past praying for, and that this ‘sin unto death’ is that sin which in the Synoptic Gospels is specified as alone unpardonable?

That the spirit which animated the Pharisees of St. John’s Gospel was identical with that which in the other Gospels is definitely termed ‘hypocrisy’ has already been shown incidentally and needs no further emphasising.

The word ὑπόκρισις does not occur here : like ὑποκρίτης it is not used by St. John at all.

The concept which it expresses is in St. John merged in the more universal concept τὸ ψεῦδος.

In this sense and with this qualifying explanation it may safely be stated that τὸ ψεῦδος of St. John is ἡ ὑπόκρισις of the Synoptists.

¹ ‘a demon’—or unclean spirit. The relation of these (δαιμόνια) to ‘the devil’ (ὁ διαβολὺς), the father of lying, the slanderer of God and man, the slayer of men, elsewhere (Apoc. xx. 2) apparently identified with ‘Satan’ (the ‘adversary’), is a question, upon which some light is thrown by Mc. iii. 22-25 and Mt. xii, 24-27, where ‘Satan’ is intimately associated, if not identified, with ‘Beelzebul, prince of the demons.’

(vii) *The Parable of the Merciless Servant.*

Mt. xviii. 21-35 ; Lc. xvii. 3, 4.

In the parable of the merciless servant (Mt. xviii. 23-34), a parable peculiar to St. Matthew, and in the words of Christ which follow (v. 35), the idea of forgiveness is introduced in circumstances which in every respect forcibly recall the doctrine of the Lord's Prayer.

The matter forgiven by the royal Master is the unpaid loan (τὸ δάνειον)—‘that debt’ (ὁφειλὴν ἐκείνην) ; while in the extra-parabolic verse (35) no accusative of the thing occurs, but a dative of the person in whose favour remission is to be made. From this concluding comment we learn further :

(a) that forgiveness of our fellowmen must be
ἀπὸ τῶν καρδιῶν :

(b) that it is as children of one Father that we must
so forgive one another (τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ) ;
while from the imagery of the parable we may safely
infer :

(c) that *mercilessness*—refusal to grant relief to the suppliant debtor who avows his debt—and not refusal to pronounce a formula, still less refusal to scatter unsolicited forgivenesses among indifferent or insolent evil-doers, is the offence which, so far as any words of Christ declare, bars the Divine forgiveness.

The parable was elicited by a question of St. Peter as to how many times—whether as often as seven times in succession—forgiveness should be granted. Christ's answer announces that there is no numerical limit to the duty of forgiving.

This non-parabolic answer appears in a somewhat different form,¹ and is more fully developed in Lc. xvii. 3, 4: 'If thy brother sin, rebuke him, and if he repent, *forgive* him: and if *seven times in the day* he sin against thee and seven times turn again (ἐπιστρέψῃ) to thee saying, "I repent," *thou shalt forgive him.*'

Whence it follows—

- (d) that the Christian rule of forgiveness does not preclude the right—nay the duty—of remonstrance and rebuke;
- (e) that the words of Christ do not appear to contemplate the possibility of forgiveness without evidence of repentance, and of explicit repentance, on the part of the wrong-doer.

¹ This may have been an earlier utterance and have thus *given rise* to St. Peter's question whether seven times was to be the limit, or it may be a variant record of *the answer* to that question, preserving the additional words which, on this view, St. Matthew will have left unrecorded, about 'turning' and repentance, with ἐπτάκις τῆς ἡμέρας instead of ἐβδομηκοντάκις ἐπτά, two phrases which may quite conceivably be approximate and complementary reports of an original 'seven times a day and on seventy days.'

(viii) *The Last Supper.*

Mt. xxvi. 28.

Thus far forgiveness—forgiveness of sins—has appeared in the Synoptic Gospels as the free gift of God, declared by the Son of Man in the case of certain individual sufferers or penitents as a realised fact, and in general as open to those children of the Kingdom of Heaven who, making petition for it to their ‘Father in Heaven,’ should from their hearts forgive the trespasses of fellowmen their debtors.

The authority of the Son of Man to forgive sins upon earth has, moreover, been conclusively established (Mt. ix. 6, Mc. ii. 20, Lc. v. 24), while the existence of a relation between *forgiveness* and *salvation*, alike of the nation and of the individual, has emerged in the ‘Benedictus’ and again in the story of the penitence of the ‘sinful woman.’

Incidental hints, if we may so speak, have also been allowed (as Mt. xx. 28)¹ regarding a price which must be paid, a sacrifice which must be offered, a suffering which must be endured, a catastrophe of self-devotion which must be accomplished, in order to the realisation of the forgiveness which the Son of Man has authority to bestow.

But the teaching thus adumbrated becomes explicit first in the discourse of Christ to His disciples at the

¹ cf. Mc. ii. 20, viii. 31, 34, ix. 12, 31, and parallels.

‘Last Supper,’ as recorded by St. Matthew. Already on the previous day had He plainly told them, ‘Ye know that after two days the Passover is held, and (or “then also”) the Son of Man is delivered up to be crucified,’ and had spoken of the woman’s gift of perfume as fitly poured upon Him—for His ‘burial.’

And now at that last eating of bread and drinking of wine on the eve of the Passion, at that first sacramental participation of the Body and Blood of Christ, He names ‘remission of sins’ as the purpose and end for which His blood was being shed : ‘My blood of the covenant, which is being poured forth for many (*περὶ πολλῶν*) unto forgiveness of sins (*εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν*).

Thus is revealed the mystery—the truth till then veiled or only now and again partially and momentarily disclosed to those who had followed the Lord during His ministry of humiliation, the truth so terrible and so pregnant with salvation—that forgiveness of sins is possible only, but then wholly, by virtue of the sacrificial shedding of the Blood of Christ.

Into the depths of that truth, into the nature and ultimate meaning of that atonement, it is not permissible in this essay to seek to penetrate.

It is enough if throughout all discussion of the Law of Forgiveness we retain the constant remembrance that forgiveness, whensoever and howsoever realised and applied, is itself a result of the Passion and Death of Christ.

(ix) *The 'Word from the Cross.'*

Lc. xxiii. 34.

The isolated sentence, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' (Πάτερ, ἄφες αὐτοῖς, οὐ γὰρ οἴδασιν τί ποιοῦσιν), constituting the first of the 'Words spoken from the Cross,' is probably no part of the authentic text of St. Luke. It is rather to be regarded as a traditionary saying, of high intrinsic claim to be held genuine, preserving at all events beyond all reasonable doubt the spirit whether of the language or of the silence of the Lord.

Accepting the words as substantially, even if not literally, authentic, we have to ascertain to whom they bear reference. Whom did the Saviour thus forgive? It is a common but an inexact answer to say that He forgave His enemies. The words as they stand can hardly refer to any other persons than the men who had just nailed Him to the Cross, the soldiers who, executing the orders of their officer, as he the orders of the civil authority, *knew not* that in so doing they murdered the Prince of Life.

The language of St. Peter to the multitude (Acts iii. 17) after Pentecost entitles us perhaps to extend the range of this prayer to the ignorant and fickle crowd which, misled by their religious rulers and established teachers, had supported the 'chief priests' in clamouring for the crucifixion of the 'King of the Jews.'

If this be the orbit of the forgiveness invoked, it yet excludes the chief priests and rulers. It is true that St. Peter in the Speech just quoted adds to the words adduced the clause ὥσπερ καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες ὑμῶν, which is usually rendered ‘as did also your readers’ (sc. ἔπραξαν, and taking ὥσπερ as recalling κατὰ ἀγνοίαν). Thus St. Peter appears to exonerate even the rulers of wilful murder of the Messiah. The Greek words, however, admit another interpretation: ‘I know (am aware) that ye did it in ignorance, as also your rulers (knew—were aware).’ This rendering derives some indirect support from the fact that in his subsequent speech *before the chief priests* St. Peter, having used regarding the Lord the words ὃν ὑμεῖς ἐσταυρώσατε, does not qualify the accusation by any such phrase as ‘I know that ye did it *in ignorance*.’

But, even if we adopt the ordinary interpretation of iii. 17, it does not follow that the chief priests should be considered as coming within the category of those who ‘knew not what they did.’ If St. Peter generously assumed for a moment the absence, even in the hierarchy, of wilful intention to murder ‘the Holy and Righteous One’ as such, it does not follow that such intention or knowledge was really absent. The Apostle was not and could not be cognisant as yet of all the complex depths of malice and jealousy which had caused the ‘chief priests’ slowly and step by step to compass the death of Jesus. In his later preaching and in his letters St. Peter gives no sign of any continued belief in the possibility of extenuating the guilt

of these ‘rulers.’ Finally, even if we should admit that in a certain sense even the chief priests acted ‘in ignorance,’ it is proper to discriminate ignorance and ignorance. That the people would not open-eyed have wished to crucify a recognised Messiah may be taken as certain. That the chief priests did not wittingly crucify the Messiah is a proposition which may doubtless be defended, but has scarcely any meaning. The ‘chief priests’ looked for and cared for no Messiah; except in so far as the usurpation of that title by some fanatic or by some adventurer might be used in furtherance of their own most selfish and irreligious policy. *Such* a Messiah they would not have crucified. But they *did* crucify One Who bore all the credentials of a true Messiah. They knew at the least that Jesus was a ‘holy and righteous’ man—a worker of works of power, of works of love and mercy—a prophet in whom reappeared all, and more than all, the moral and spiritual grandeur of those prophets of old, whose ‘sepulchres they builded,’ whose prophecies they pretended to revere. If they saw not, they had blinded their own eyes. Their ignorance, unlike the ignorance of the people, was self-inflicted and resolute.

Not of them, we may venture to believe, not of ignorance such as theirs spake Jesus when He said, ‘Forgive them, for they know not what they do.’

(x) *Forgiveness of sins for all nations.*

Lc. xxiv. 45-47.

The records of the Revelation of the risen Lord contain but two direct and explicit references to 'Forgiveness.' Of these the one is found in St. Luke, the last of the Synoptic passages concerning 'forgiveness,' the other in the Gospel of St. John.

In St. Luke's record the assembled disciples—Apostles and others besides—convinced at last of the fact of the Resurrection, receive from the risen Christ Himself enlightenment and instruction regarding the fulfilment in Him of the ancient Scriptures; and they are bidden to proclaim in His name 'repentance unto forgiveness of sins' universally:—τότε διήνοιξεν αὐτῶν τὸν νοῦν τοῦ συνιέναι τὰς γραφὰς· καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὅτι οὕτως γέγραπται παθεῖν τὸν χριστὸν καὶ ἀναστῆναι ἐκ νεκρῶν τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ, καὶ κηρυχθῆναι ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ μετάνοιαν εἰς ἅφεςιν ἁμαρτιῶν εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη.

It is not quite clear whether in the text of St. Luke the infinitive κηρυχθῆναι depends directly upon εἶπεν, as is commonly assumed, or upon γέγραπται. In the latter case the Lord will have discovered to His disciples, in the ancient Scriptures of the Jewish Church, prophetic intimation that after the Coming of Messiah—of a Messiah who should suffer death and rise again—all the nations of the world should be invited by the Apostles, His heralds, in the strength of His name to repent in order to the forgiveness of their sins. In the

former case the universal proclamation of repentance unto forgiveness rests ultimately, as well as immediately, on the injunction of the Lord Himself. But in either case this passage is unique in the Synoptic Gospels.

(i) It *links* and blends for ever the Gospel of the Resurrection with the Gospel of Forgiveness.

The Gospel of Forgiveness, underlying the denunciations and promises of all Hebrew prophecy, had in the song of Zacharias first emerged as a message to be presently proclaimed to individuals. Proclaimed in due time by John his son, that Gospel had been reiterated by the Christ, whose forerunner John had professed himself to be and was; and during His earthly ministry it had been illustrated by miracle and by parable and defined by precept and by example.

And now it is merged but not extinguished in a new transcendent revelation, crowned but not superseded by the Gospel of the Resurrection.

(ii) This passage exhibits clearly and unambiguously the universality of the message of forgiveness.

‘Unto all the nations’ is the proclamation to go forth. That universality of the Messianic kingdom—no less than the portraiture of the Messiah as a Saviour—had been foreshadowed in prophecy and signified in miracle and parable. But not till now is it established, beyond all controversy and subterfuge of interpretation, that ‘all the nations of the world’ are in the purpose of God recipients of His Gospel of forgiveness to the penitent.

(xi) *The Testimony of St. John.*

From the testimony of the Synoptists, culminating in Le. xxiv. 47, we turn to the testimony of St. John. It is contained expressly in three passages, one in the Gospels, two in the first Epistle ; and these, having regard to the intimate connexion manifestly subsisting between the Gospel and the First Epistle, it is proper to group and examine together.

(a) Jo. xx. 19-23. The words directly relevant to the investigation of the idea of Forgiveness are v. 21 : ‘He (Jesus) therefore said unto them again, “Peace (be) unto you : as the Father hath sent Me forth (ἀπέσταλκεν), even so send I (πέμπω) you.” And having said this He breathed upon them and saith to them, “Receive ye (the) Holy Spirit : whosoever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them ; whosoever ye retain, they are retained (ἂν τινων ἀφήτε τὰς ἁμαρτίας, ἀφέωνται αὐτοῖς · ἂν τινων κρατῆτε, κεκράτηνται).” ’ But the whole context of the ‘Great Commission’ has an important bearing upon the study of the Law of Forgiveness.

The revelation recorded by St. John is undoubtedly identical with that given by St. Luke. ‘The record of St. John’ as a great English theologian truly says, ‘is the complement of the record of St. Luke.’

In the words of the Lord preserved by St. Luke ‘forgiveness of sins’ was presented as ensuing upon

repentance, upon repentance wrought in obedience to a proclamation issued and ratified in and upon the Name of the Lord Jesus.

In the words of the Lord preserved by St. John 'forgiveness of sins' appears consequent upon an act of the Church corporate, wrought in the strength of a Commission granted, and of an Inspiration bestowed, by the Risen Lord to His assembled disciples. The nature of the action thus authorised, the limitations of the prerogative thus delegated, cannot fittingly be investigated here. Four points, however, may be noted :

(i) The power of absolution stands in close and necessary relation with the reception from Christ of the Holy Spirit.

It is therefore inconceivable that the power of absolution should ever reside in a society, or in an individual, where the Holy Spirit is not present and immanent. Bestowal of the Holy Spirit is, by universal admission of all schools of theology, the abiding and unsundered prerogative of God alone, of God the Father and God the Son. It seems to follow that bestowal of the power of absolution must be, likewise and correspondingly, continuous, and subject altogether to the continuance of that other gift. Authority to absolve is a function of reception of the Holy Spirit.

(ii) The power of absolution was given at a particular time and place by the Risen Christ to a certain assemblage of living persons, including, but not confined to, the Apostolic body, one member of that body being absent, and other disciples not Apostles being present.

(iii) It is a power of insight, a gift of prophetic discernment, rather than any right of arbitrary decision, which is bestowed.

‘If ye forgive (aorist) the sins of any (in the order of things temporal), they are —already— (in the order of things eternal) forgiven (perfect). If ye retain (present), omitting the act (the aoristic act) of forgiveness (here in space and time), they are (yet and unchangeably) retained (in the order of things eternal).’

(iv) The Commission occupies a close relationship with the office of the Apostolate in its widest sense. It is to those whom Christ sends forth, sends forth under His own present guidance (*πέμπω ὑμᾶς*), that it is given to receive from Him the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and therewith the authority to remit and to retain.

(b) 1 Jo. i. 9 ; ii. 12. The First Epistle of St. John adds to the doctrine of Forgiveness, as ascertained from the Synoptists and from the single reference, just discussed, in his own Gospel, several organic elements.

From 1 Jo. i. 9—‘If we confess our sins (*ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν*), He is faithful and righteous (*πιστός ἐστιν καὶ δίκαιος*) to forgive us our sins (*ἵνα ἀφῇ ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας*) and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (*καὶ καθαρίσῃ ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀδικίας*)’—we learn—

- (1) that confession of sin is a condition, the sole condition to be fulfilled by Christians, of the forgiveness of sins ;

- (2) that upon confession forgiveness is certain : the certainty resting not upon any subjective complacency of the person forgiven, but upon the objective fact of the faithfulness and righteousness of the Divine Author of forgiveness.

There is no caprice or fitfulness in the mercy of God. And further, the last words of the verse cited (i. 9) require us, unless we regard them as *defining* forgiveness—an hypothesis open to objections—to admit

- (3) that forgiveness is to be followed and consummated by a further process, that of the *cleansing* of the sin-stained soul.

From 1 Jo. ii. 12, we learn—

- (4) that forgiveness of past particular sins is at each moment in the life of them that believe upon, that trust in, the Name of the Son of God a present and finished fact :—

ἀφέωνται ὑμῖν αἱ ἁμαρτίαι διὰ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ.

There is nothing here to sustain any supra-lapsarian theory or any conceit of perfectionism. Our sins, if and so long as we are in the light, if and so long as we are in fellowship with the Father and the Son (i. 3), if and so long as we *are* followers of Christ (ii. 6) indeed, are forgiven, forgiven and blotted out ‘*for the sake of His name,*’ that is to say, *because* He is that which He is, because the Son of God became and is Jesus, the Christ, Who died and is alive.

The fact of the Incarnation is the basis of the reality of Forgiveness.

(xii.) *The Teaching of St Peter.*

Acts ii. 38 ; v. 31 ; viii. 22 ; x. 43.

In the preaching of St. Peter at Jerusalem the doctrine of forgiveness appears in the same form in which it is found in the last chapter of St. Luke's Gospel. To the enquirers among the multitude on the Day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 38)¹ and again before the High Priest with his Sadducee associates and the Sanhedrin (v. 31),² St. Peter declares *repentance and forgiveness of sins* to be a gift given of God to His people through Jesus the Christ. In the former passage the Apostle couples with his exhortation to repentance an exhortation or injunction that the penitents should severally 'be baptised in the Name of Jesus Christ.' Forgiveness is here, then, presented as the object at once of repentance and of the sacramental observance.³ In other words, although the indispensableness of water-baptism to forgiveness and consequent salvation cannot be deduced or inferred from this passage, baptism is implicitly here described as a means of grace.

¹ Acts ii. 38. Μετανοήσατε, καὶ βαπτισθήτω ἕκαστος ὑμῶν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν.

² Acts v. 31. τοῦτον ὁ Θεὸς ἀρχηγὸν καὶ σωτῆρα ὑψωσεν τῇ δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ, [τοῦ] δοῦναι μετάνοιαν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν.

³ A co-ordination which goes to show that St. Luke reproduces, and does not compose, St. Peter's Speeches; for in his Gospel he specifies 'repentance' only as the antecedent of forgiveness, and does not mention 'baptism,' as St. Matthew does in *his* Gospel.

A special instance of the application to an individual transgressor of the Apostolic doctrine of Forgiveness is afforded by St. Peter's admonition to Simon Magus (Acts viii. 22), 'Repent thee therefore of this thy wickedness (μετανόησον οὖν ἀπὸ τῆς κακίας σου ταύτης) and entreat the Lord if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee (εἰ ἄρα ἀφεθήσεται σοι, κ.τ.λ.), a passage which is valuable as proving that thoughts of the heart no less than overt acts are, in the Apostolic view, matter of Divine condemnation and need the Divine forgiveness.

To the household of Cornelius forgiveness of sins is put forward (x. 43) as a free gift offered 'through His name' (διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ). In lieu of repentance, faith, a continuous faith in the Person of Christ (πάντα τὸν πιστεύοντα εἰς αὐτὸν) is here, and here first quite clearly, specified as the essential condition of forgiveness. In this substitution there is no change of doctrine.

A continuous faith involves and implies a previous and sustained repentance. And repentance—the particular repentance required by St. Peter of the listeners at Jerusalem—would imply, in them at all events, faith of some sort in the Person of Him Whom having helped to crucify they were now invited to accept as the risen Messiah, a Prince of Life and a Saviour.

The listeners at Caesarea had not helped to crucify the Lord; the 'sins' for which they needed forgiveness were of a different type. As they listened to the Story of the Cross and the proclamation of the fact of

the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Lord of all and Judge, by Divine ordinance, of the living and the dead, they believed, and on them as they thus listened fell the great gift of the Holy Spirit, anticipating in this instance the administration of the 'outward sign,' which the Apostle then caused them to receive.

The interrelation of repentance and faith, and of both with forgiveness, already manifest in the account of the penitence of the Magdalene (Lc. vii. 36 *seq.*), has now become more definite.

It is remarkable that the Epistles of St. Peter contain no express mention of 'forgiveness.' But when in 1 Peter i. 3 God the Father is blessed as 'He Who according to His abundant mercy begat us anew unto a living hope by resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,'—us 'who are being guarded' here and now 'in God's might, through *faith* unto salvation—,' we feel that repentance and forgiveness, though not mentioned, are presupposed and understood by a context which contains all the correlated terms—'mercy,' 'faith,' 'salvation'—with which elsewhere the concepts of 'repentance' and 'forgiveness' are connected.

Similarly a sustained repenting of past misdeeds is implied in the language of 1 Pet. i. 13-15; while, correspondingly, the language of *vv.* 18-25 *implies* forgiveness obtained by grace of a sacrificial redemption. And we may compare ii. 24, especially the words *ἵνα τοῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἀπογενόμενοι τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ ζήσωμεν*—words which point to initial penitence, final righteousness, and, by consequence, Divine forgiveness intermediate.

(xiii) *The Teaching of St. Paul.*

It is almost startling to realise that 'forgiveness of sins' is expressly mentioned no more than four times in the extant Speeches and Letters of St. Paul.

The term occurs once in the speech spoken at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii. 38), once in the speech before Agrippa (xxvi. 18), once in the Epistle 'to the Ephesians' (i. 7), and once in that to the Colossians (i. 47).

In the two former instances the Pauline usage is largely parallel to the Petrine :—though St. Paul's on both occasions is addressed, primarily at least, to a Jewish auditory.¹

To the congregation of Jews in Pisidian Antioch, St. Paul, after relating the central facts of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus (vv. 26-31), and showing how ancient prophecy, and in particular certain words of the 2nd and 16th Psalms, found in these facts a true fulfilment, proceeds to say : 'Be it therefore known unto you, brethren, that through this (man) *forgiveness of sins* is announced (*καταγγέλλεται*), and in Him (*ἐν τούτῳ*) every one that believeth (*πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων*) is justified (*δικαιοῦνται*) from all things from which ye could not under the law of Moses (*ἐν νόμῳ Μωσέως*) be justified.'

'Forgiveness of sins' is thus already co-ordinated by

¹ The speech before Agrippa is directed primarily to Agrippa himself and the other Jews present, only incidentally to the Gentile governor and his attendants. The general populace of Caesarea, if represented in court, would be mainly Jewish.

St. Paul with justification; the latter concept, and not the former, being placed in immediate connexion with the condition of faith, of continuous belief (*πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων*).

In the speech before Agrippa, the words ‘that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me’² form part of the instruction addressed by Christ himself to Saul at the time of his conversion, whether actually at the instant of his vision outside Damascus or during the days of his seclusion within the city through the agency of Ananias or otherwise. They stand co-ordinate with the phrases ‘to turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God,’ and themselves include the co-ordinate concepts ‘remission of sins’ and ‘inheritance among the sanctified’; and the means of reception alike of the forgiveness and of the inheritance is pronounced to be ‘faith’—a faith which has for its object the Person of Christ (*πίστει τῇ εἰς ἐμέ*).

Of repentance (*μετάνοια*), which, in the preaching of the Baptist and the first preaching of St. Peter, was the crucial preliminary of forgiveness, there is no mention here. Yet *πίστις* is not here, as in St. Peter’s address to the household of Cornelius, precisely substituted for *μετάνοια*. Rather it might seem as if ‘repentance’ was here analysed into its three moments—an enlightenment, a conversion (*ἐπιστροφή*) or turning round of the self, and belief.

² τοῦ λαβεῖν αὐτοὺς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν καὶ κληρὸν ἐν τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις
πίστει τῇ εἰς ἐμέ.

It remains to consider the two instances of ἄφεσις in the Pauline Epistles. In both (Eph. i. 7 and Col. i. 14) τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν (Col.) or τῶν παραπτωμάτων (Eph.) is equated, and apparently identified, with τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν—‘redemption.’ This seeming identification recalls the language of the ‘Benedictus’ and Christ’s exposition at Nazareth of the verses of Isaiah concerning the release of prisoners.

The Passion and Death of Christ intervening have converted the act of release into an act of redemption.

The prisoners of sin have been bought back, redeemed with a price, even with the Blood of Christ.

This differentiating event, if the expression may be allowed, this self-sacrifice of the Deliverer for the salvation of the bondsmen of Satan (cp. Acts xxvi. 18), is expressed in Eph. i. 7 (διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ), but not in the parallel verse of the Epistle to the Colossians: where, however, the context is full of that same earlier language which has been noted as common to ‘Isaiah,’ the Benedictus, the Sermon at Nazareth, and Christ’s revelation of Himself to St. Paul at Damascus. The resemblance¹ between Col. i. 12-14 and Acts xxvi. 17-18

¹ Acts xxvi. 17, 18.

τοῦ ἐπιστρέψαι ἀπὸ σκοτous
εἰς φῶς
καὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ Σατανᾶ
ἐπὶ τὸν Θεόν
καὶ λαβεῖν αὐτοὺς ἄφεσιν
ἁμαρτιῶν
καὶ κλήρον ἐν τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις.

² Col. i. 12-14.

εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ Θεῷ (v.l. πατρὶ)
τῷ ἱκανώσαντι ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν μέριδα τοῦ
κλήρου τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ φωτί, ὃς ἐρύσατο
ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκοτους καὶ
μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ
τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ, ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπο-
λύτρωσιν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν.

the purposes of the present enquiry it is not necessary to examine the relation of the Pauline doctrine of justification to the law of forgiveness. The 'locus classicus' on this subject would be Rom. iv. 25, *ὃς παρεδόθη διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν καὶ ἠγέρθη διὰ τὴν δικαίωσιν ἡμῶν* (cp. Is. liii. 12, LXX.), to which may perhaps be added Rom. vi. 7, *ὁ ἀποθανὼν δεδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας*. 'Forgiveness of trespasses' we seem to be told is the necessary antecedent of justification, as the Passion was the necessary antecedent of the Resurrection of Christ; an analogy which may help us the better to understand how baptism in water could be regarded as truly symbolic at once of repentance and remission of sins (as by St. Peter in Acts ii. 38 *seq.*) and of that participation in the death and resurrection of Christ—of that death with Him and rising together with Him which is asserted by St. Paul (Col. ii. 12) of the believer so far as he is truly such.

We have still to examine an important group of Pauline passages, in which the English word 'forgive' occurs in our versions as a rendering not of *ἀφίεναι* or of any derivative of that Greek verb but of *χαρίζεσθαι*.

The verb *χαρίζεσθαι* occurs twenty-two times in the New Testament, fifteen of these occurrences being Pauline; all the non-Pauline instances being either in the Gospel of St. Luke (vii. 21, 42, 43) or in the Acts (iii. 14, xxv. 11, 16, xxvii. 24).

In six¹ of the Pauline and in two (Lc. vii. 42, 43) of

¹ which, however, are practically reduced to three by the fact that

the non-Pauline instances, the word appears to bear definitely the sense 'forgive,' and is so translated in our English versions.¹ Elsewhere the word is rendered 'gave' (Phil. ii. 9), 'bestowed' (Lc. vii. 21.), 'granted' (Acts iii. 14, xxiii. 24, Gal. iii. 18, Phil. i. 29, Philemon 22 : *cf.* Acts xxv. 11, 16), 'freely give' (Rom. viii. 32, 1 Cor. ii. 12). In most of the instances just cited, the object or (when the verb is passive) the subject is a person ; in one only (Lc. vii. 21) is it a particular thing that is granted. In 1 Cor. ii. 12, Rom. viii. 32, we appear to come in sight of the transition to that special and peculiarly Pauline use of the word in connexion with debt or misdeeds, which alone concerns us here.

In the earliest Pauline Epistles there is no example of this usage. When, however, we pass to the Epistles of the second group we find it in 2 Cor. ii. 7, 10 ; 'so that contrariwise ye should rather *forgive* him ——'. But to whom ye *forgive* anything, I (forgive) also : for what I also have *forgiven*, if I have *forgiven* anything, for your sakes (have I done so) ; and thus in xii. 13 '*forgive* me me this wrong (*ἀδικίαν*).

But it is in the Epistles of the Roman Captivity that we find the most important instances.

Writing to the Colossians, St. Paul says (ii. 13), 'And you, dead as ye were in (or 'by') your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He quickened

four of the six occur within one context (2. Cor. ii. 7-10) ; but are raised again to five in number, if we accept 'forgive' as the meaning in Col. iii. 13 and Eph. iv. 32.

¹ In Lc. vii. 42, A.V. has 'frankly forgave.'

(‘made alive’) together with Him (Christ), *having forgiven* us all our trespasses’ (v. Lightfoot *ad loc*). The aorist participle indicates that the forgiveness or free gift thus denoted is a single act, immediately anterior to that quickening, that renewal of life, which is elsewhere termed ‘regeneration’ and is here expressed by the words ‘quicken together with Him.’ The preceding context (v. 12) exhibits the connexion between both these gifts and the fact of baptism; while the ensuing context (v. 14) presents, under a characteristic Pauline metaphor, the former of the two, forgiveness of past transgression, as an effect of the death of Christ upon the Cross. The general teaching of this passage, therefore, regarding Forgiveness accords with those where ἀφεσις is the term employed.

This, however, does not foreclose the question, which naturally arises here, whether the verbs χαρίζεσθαι and ἀφίεναι, as used by St. Paul and St. Luke, who alone in the New Testament use χαρίζεσθαι, are actually synonymous. The answer, if I may anticipate the evidence of the remaining occurrences of χαρίζεσθαι, would seem to be that the two Greek words are approximately, but not absolutely synonymous, when used in relation to debts or sins. The following points deserve notice. (a) The word χαρίζεσθαι, unlike ἀφίεναι, has no Hebraic associations; it is not, that is to say, the equivalent of any Hebrew word or words; it does not come from the LXX. It is thus fitly and naturally used by St. Paul, addressing Greek converts, and by St. Luke, his companion. (b) While both words denote the same moral

event, their connotation is not identical. 'Αφίεναι imports the conception of purgation ; while χαρίζεσθαι, containing no such thought, emphasises the free and non-contractual quality of God's forgiveness of the penitent ; it connotes 'grace' (χάρις).

This view of the interrelation of the words is consistent, I believe, with the use of χαρίζεσθαι in the only other places in St. Paul where it can mean 'forgive.' In Col. iii. 13 he appears to use it of forgiveness of men by men. The whole context is important. 'Take on, therefore,' he writes, 'as God's elect, sacred (to Him) and (by Him) beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, long-suffering ; bearing with one another and (freely) *forgiving* one another, if any (of you) have cause of complaint against any, even as the Lord freely *forgave* you, so also do ye.'

In the parallel passage of the 'Ephesian' Epistle (Eph. iv. 32) this is put succinctly : 'that ye be toward one another kind, compassionate, *forgiving* [or 'giving freely to'] one another, even as God in Christ *forgave* [or 'gave freely to'] you.

It is, indeed, as the rendering of these verses I have indicated, not altogether certain that the words χαρίζομενος, ἐχαρίσατο refer here specifically to forgiveness of transgression. It is at least possible that the meaning here is wider and that it includes all manner of free, open-handed, large-hearted bounty. This larger interpretation may be thought to be supported by the long list of qualities of heart which the Apostle urges his readers, especially those at Colossae, to 'take

on.' And though in the Colossian Epistle the words 'If any have cause of complaint against any' might seem to determine the interpretation of *χαρίζεσθαι* in both the parallel places in favour of the rendering 'forgive,' this inference is not altogether certain. Even in the Colossian letter, bountiful generosity rather than specific forgiveness may be the disposition enjoined ; while even if this be thought unlikely there is no absolute reason why at any rate in the less specific Ephesian letter the reference of the term should not be wider.

In any case we see that the word *χαρίζεσθαι*, as used by St. Paul, while capable of denoting forgiveness contemplated as God's free gift, is necessarily not limited to that particular manifestation of the Divine bounty or grace.

(xiv) *The Teaching of St. James.*

Jas. v. 15.

Having asserted the efficacy of ‘the prayer of faith’ (ἡ εὐχὴ τῆς πίστεως) to save (σώσει) him who is sick, St. James adds : ‘and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him (κἂν ἁμαρτίας ᾗ πεποιηκώς, ἀφεθήσεται αὐτῷ).

Thus is prayer—particular prayer—recognised as a special medium for the expression of that ‘faith’ which is elsewhere (*e.g.* Acts x. 43, xiii. 38 *seq.*) named as necessary to the realisation of ‘forgiveness.’

Repentance is not here named, but, instead, confession, *reciprocal* confession to one another of the sins done by each one. But the duty of thus confessing our sins one to another is put on a level with the duty of praying for one another.

(xv) ‘*Forgiveness*’ in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews contributes to the doctrine of Forgiveness two important elements.

(1) Heb. ix. 22 : χωρὶς αἵματεκχυσίας οὐ γίνεται ἄφεσις. ‘Apart from shedding of blood remission (of sin) is impossible.’

This statement marks in summary the significance of the recurrent Levitical blood-shedding relatively to the final and unrepeated oblation of the blood of Christ.

The words τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης (‘blood of the covenant’) in v. 20, cited from Ex. xxiv. 8, link this context with Mt. xxvi. 28 (v. supr.)

(2) Heb. x. 18 : ὅπου δὲ ἄφεσις τούτων (sc. τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν καὶ τῶν ἀνομιῶν) οὐκετι προσφορά περὶ ἁμαρτίας.

These words have a direct reference to Jer. xxxi. 31-34, which is cited in the verses preceding. The closing words of that citation afford something like a *definition* of ἄφεσις :—

καὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν καὶ τῶν ἀνομιῶν αὐτῶν οὐ μὴ μνησθήσομαι ἔτι.

Forgiveness of sins is ultimately, if we may so say, a Divine oblivion of our ill deeds.

This view of forgiveness is illustrated by many utterances of the prophets concerning sin, where forgiveness is thus indirectly described, but not expressed by any single word.

Thus Ezekiel is really *describing* ‘forgiveness’ when he says (Ez. xviii. 22) :—‘All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him’;¹ just as in the verse preceding ‘Now if the wicked man will *turn from* all his sins that he hath committed ——’ he has *described* ‘repentance.’

But besides these passages the Epistle contains others in which the fact of forgiveness is denoted or implied by terms expressing the ideas of ‘purification,’ ‘release,’ ‘propitiation,’ ‘ransom,’ or ‘disburdening.’

In i. 3 Christ is described as ‘having wrought a cleansing (or ‘purgation’) of sins’ in that ‘world disordered by sin’ (*v. Westcott ad loc*) which He had entered at the Nativity.

At ii. 15 we are told that the object of His Incarnation and Passion was ‘to bring to nought’ the devil, and to ‘set free’ (*ἵνα ἀπαλλάξῃ*) all ‘them that through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.’

And at v. 17 the object of His Passion and the function of His High Priesthood is declared to be ‘to make propitiation for the sins of the people’ (*εἰς τὸ ἱλάσκεσθαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ*).

At vi. 1, where the author of the Epistle prefaces his exhortation to progress by a reference to the fundamental or primary doctrines which are now to be taken for granted among Christians, Forgiveness (*ἄφεσις*) is not

¹ לֹא יִזְכָּר לוֹ. The second clause of v. 22: ‘in his righteousness which he hath done shall he live,’ seems to show how ‘forgiveness’ is followed by ‘justification.’

expressly named, but is denoted, or connoted, by the words ‘having tasted the heavenly gift’ (v. 4, γευσάμενους—τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου) ; while Repentance significantly holds the first place among the fundamentals that need no fresh arguing, ‘repentance from dead works.’

And it is from such ‘dead works’ that, on repentance, the blood of Christ, as we are reminded at ix. 14, ‘will cleanse our conscience, the Blood of Christ, Who (v. 12) ‘through His own blood entered once for all into the holy place, having obtained an eternal redemption.’ The cleansing ‘of our conscience’ or ‘of our consciousness,’ is a phrase which marks the extension of the effects of absolution to the realm of thought, even to ‘the thoughts of our heart.’

At v. 28 of the same chapter, Christ is spoken of as having been once offered up ‘to bear away the sins of many’ (εἰς τὸ πολλῶν ἁμαρτίας ἀνενεγκέιν), just as in 1 Pet. i. 24 it is said that ‘He bare away our sins on to the tree.’ The phrase, as Bishop Westcott (*ad loc.*) points out, is taken from the LXX. of Is. liii. 12 (6), where ἀνένεγκεν represents the Kal of the same Hebrew verb, of which the Piel, as stated above, properly meaning ‘lift off,’ is evidently translated ‘forgive’ in the O.T. This lifting away, or bearing away, of sins is in fact one element in, and part of, but not the whole of, forgiveness. It and the cleansing or purgation denoted in the O.T. by the other Hebrew word rendered ‘forgive’ are complementary parts of, or moments in, forgiveness.

Forgiveness in something like its entirety seems to

be denoted by the phrases 'take away sins' (x. 4. ἀφαιρῆν ἁμαρτίας) and 'strip away sins' (x. 11.). It is an effect which the shedding of blood of bulls and goats is then declared incapable of accomplishing. It needed nothing less than the shedding of the blood of Christ. But *that* offering is all-sufficient. And thus we are brought to the quotation from Jeremiah and to the second occurrence, above discussed, of the word ἄφεσις in this Epistle.

The interrelation between 'cleansing' and 'forgiveness' (release or disburdening) is to some extent shown at ix. 22, already cited: 'It is in blood that all things *are cleansed* according to the law, and apart from blood-shedding there cometh not *remission*.' The reference in the first clause is to ritual, symbolic cleansing, as in the second clause it is ritual remission, or release, which is intended. But as are the symbols *inter se*, so are the things symbolised. Now these are spiritual operations, of which the one, remission of sins, is the immediate antecedent of the other, cleansing or purification.

Elsewhere, as has been said above (pp. 11, 26), forgiveness (ἄφεσις) of sins or transgressions *includes* more or less distinctly the conception of 'cleansing' in combination with that of 'release' or 'deliverance.' Here ἄφεσις, used absolutely without any genitive of the subject, presents the thought of release or remission in the bare etymological sense of that term, with little or no intrinsic suggestion of that other scriptural aspect of 'forgiveness,' the concept of cleansing or purgation,

which accordingly is here expressed by a separate word—*καθαρίζεται*.

The noun *καθαρισμὸς*, ‘cleansing’ or ‘purification,’ as we have seen, is used in the Prologue of the Epistle to denote the final effect of the Passion and Death of the Incarnate Christ. And the verb *καθαρίζειν*, ‘cleanse’ or ‘purify,’ is used, in a sense other than physical, outside this Epistle, in Acts xv. 9 (*τῇ πίστει κ. τὰς ἁμαρτίας*), 2 Cor. vii. 1, Eph. v. 2, 6, Tit. ii. 14 (*κ. ἐαυτῷ λαῶν*), and 1 Jo. i. 7, 9 (*ἀδικίας*).

On the whole, then, it appears that ‘forgiveness’ (*ἄφεσις*), as normally used in the New Testament, signifies a complex fact—a specific release, deliverance or disburdening, which at the same time, in order to realisation, requires and, viewed as a Divine gift, is always accompanied by a present and retrospective cleansing or purgation. The latter operation, however, is in the Apostolic Epistles,—though scarcely in the Gospels—regarded as a separate fact, as a consequence rather than a concomitant of remission proper. Accordingly in the Epistles the words expressing this operation tend to replace the words proper to the complex and undifferentiated concept of ‘forgiveness.’

5. *The object-matter of Forgiveness.*

The foregoing epitome of Biblical usage will have indicated with substantial accuracy, if not with formal precision, the nature of 'forgiveness' as conceived and promulgated in the New Testament, as well as the history of the use of the word ἄφεσις.

It remains to note briefly in the light of these authoritative sources the conditions of the actualisation of this concept.

The *object-matter* of forgiveness is, as has been seen, Debts (ὀφειλήματα), Transgressions (παραπτώματα) or Sins (ἁμαρτήματα,—ἁμαρτίαι).

The mutual relation of these terms has been already discussed. It was seen that ὀφειλήματα and παραπτώματα are complementary terms belonging to the temporal order—the one objective, the other subjective: while ἁμαρτίαι is a term belonging properly, if we may so say, to the eternal order.

A seemingly different account of the relation of 'debts' to 'transgressions' is suggested by the familiar classification of sins into sins of omission and sins of commission. That classification, if not delusive—and it can hardly be thought to be entirely delusive—ought, it might be supposed, to find some recognition in the terminology of the New Testament: and it is not unnatural to expect to discover evidence of it in the variant terms ὀφειλήματα and παραπτώματα.

The truth appears to be that the difference between 'sins of omission' and 'sins of commission' is real, but not specific. The *fundamentum divisionis* is found in the occasion rather than in the moral complexion of the sin. Neglect of a moral duty, as, for example, refusal to hear the cause of the widow, or to judge righteous judgment, sustained omission to give to the labourer his due or to give the cup of cold water to the thirsty suppliant, will be, primarily, a sin of omission, a privative violation of a positive duty. On the other hand murder, rapine, theft, overt dishonour of parents, aggressive cruelty, will belong primarily to the class of sins of commission. Does this distinction, then, coincide with the difference between *ὀφειλήματα* and *παραπτώματα*, a difference which was seen to be a difference of *aspect*? Ultimately it does so coincide. Every sin of omission is also, viewed strictly from within, strictly from the point of view of the sinner, a sin of commission: so viewed, it is a 'trespass' (transgression, delict), though viewed from without it was a debt. Every sin of commission, if viewed from without, from the point of view of the injured party, is also (in the absence of reparation) a sin of omission: so regarded, it is a 'debt,' a fact craving compensation, though viewed from within it was a transgression, a 'trespass.' That is to say, the distinction between sins of omission and sins of commission, is found to be really a difference of aspect; which has, however, become a difference of occasion and therefore a ground of classification, because in certain conditions and

relations of life duty is primarily positive, primarily a rendering of that which is due, while in others it is primarily negative, primarily an abstention from that which is unlawful. In the former case, where the moral precept is 'Thou shalt,' disregard of it is a leaving undone that which we ought to do. In the latter case, where the precept is 'Thou shalt not,' we, by disregarding it, do that which we ought not to do. And on repentance we make our confession accordingly, thus distinguishing, without however separating, omission from commission. But, as we pass from the temporal to the eternal, the distinction is finally transcended. A sin of commission, though always a 'trespass,' is always more than a trespass. And a sin of omission, though always a 'debt,' is always more than a debt. Both alike are violations not merely of temporal statutes, customs, or expectations, but also, in a less or greater degree, of the eternal laws of justice and mercy.

It is because, and in so far as, they are violations of these *eternal* laws that sins, whether of omission or of commission, *are* sins and abominable in the sight of God.

Those laws transcend all other laws. Observance of them between man and man is the end to which, as all the prophets bear witness, the special ordinances and commands given by Jehovah through Moses and other of His servants to the people of Israel, were means. Nothing can be more untrue than to assert, as has sometimes been asserted, that the God of Israel is

presented in the Old Testament as caring little how men oppress and destroy one another so long as no rival deity is worshipped.

Jehovah is 'a jealous God': and the immediate motive, if the word may reverently be used, of this His 'jealousy' or 'zeal' is declared to be idolatrous preference by Israel of 'other gods,'—adulterous surrender of themselves to the gods of the nations, the gods that were no gods but the work of men's hands. But the ultimate and sufficient ground, the ethical justification, of that 'jealousy' was manifest as the daylight to every true worshipper of Jehovah. Semitic idolatry, that idolatry which throughout the Old Testament is figured as 'adultery' on the part of Israel, did not merely deprive Jehovah of the worship due to Him from His people whom He had brought up out of Egypt, however it may be their ingratitude, and desertion of Jehovah, which for reasons not far to seek are most constantly emphasised. Idolatry brought with it subversion of those moral laws which only the worship of Jehovah could possibly maintain in the hearts of the people.

6. *The law of Forgiveness,—its conditions and consequent limitations.*

Forgiveness, in the Christian doctrine, is not an arbitrary declaration, but a universal effect of a moral law.

(a) The *objective condition* of forgiveness is a certain change of attitude on the part of the person to be forgiven. *Forgiveness presupposes repentance.*

Neither in the Jewish nor in the Christian Scripture is there any word or sign to authorise the belief that there can be such a thing as forgiveness of the impenitent.

Repentance, or moral change of mind, *μετάνοια*, may be analysed, as has been indicated above, into moments, or presented in various aspects. It may be signified either formally, 'I repent,' or informally by an act, a cessation, a prayer, a sign of self-abasement.

But a theory of forgiveness without repentance, besides having absolutely no warrant whatever in the authoritative sources of Christian doctrine, is essentially fictitious and immoral.

(i) It is fictitious. No one ever *really* forgave an unrepented transgression. The sufferer may have been induced by extrinsic pressure to utter a formula purporting to convey forgiveness. More often one who is not the sufferer, but himself the transgressor, employs

hypocritically, and with a large measure of self-deception, a form of words calculated to secure to himself the credit of goodness of heart and to fix upon the true victim the infamy due to his oppressor. The perfect hypocrite invariably forgives all his enemies, each in proportion to his innocence.

But the true disciple of Christ makes no such pretence of dispensing with the rule of repentance as a condition of forgiveness. Except proleptically he will not forgive the impenitent wrongdoer. He will indeed refrain from vengeance. He will peradventure by deeds of kindness seek to win to repentance the as yet impenitent transgressor. He will declare his *readiness* to forgive so soon as repentance is manifested : even as God announces beforehand His willingness to forgive sinners. He will pray God to turn the hearts of those that do him wrong, that so they may, being repentant, come within the scope of the Law of Forgiveness. In this sense he may by a generous, though scarcely advisable, inaccuracy of language say that he ‘forgives’ a yet unrepented transgression. But such readiness, and such proleptic language, in no way alters the truth that a doctrine of forgiveness without repentance is fictitious.

(ii) It is immoral. No difference is left between the penitent and the impenitent. Justice is simply mocked. The proud and insolent transgressor goes unchecked, unrebuked ; he suffers no humiliation. The Church of the redeemed, the Apocalyptic City of God, is by anticipation defiled with the presence of the liar and the murderer, of him who does not the truth, and of him

who hateth his brother. The morality of the Gospel of Christ is stultified and superseded. And not only Christian Ethics as such, but the very basis of ethical thought, whatever account be given of the name and nature of that basis, cannot but be contradicted by a theory which allows, or enjoins, that unrepented transgression is ever forgiven either by God or by man.

(b) The subjective condition of forgiveness is *love* (ἀγάπη). Forgiveness expresses Love.

Love is the motive of forgiveness.

It is important thus to distinguish true forgiveness from that other and spurious form which expresses not love, but a desire for ease and happiness consisting merely of pleasures.

That true forgiveness has for its motive love (ἀγάπη) is a proposition which, however it may appear to some minds a truism and to others a barren or meaningless fragment of religious metaphysics, is at any rate clearly deducible from the theology of the New Testament and, like other propositions so deducible, has its roots in the theology of the Old Testament. It may suffice if, in illustration, a few of the more decisive passages are adduced :—

Deut. vii. 7, 8 : ἀλλὰ παρὰ τὸ ἀγαπᾶν Κύριον ὑμᾶς ἐξήγαγεν, καὶ ἐλυτρώσατο.

Psalms li. 1 : καὶ κατὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν σου ἐξάλειψον τὸ νόμημά ἄμου (cf. 1 K. x. 9, Is. xxxviii. 17).

Is. lxiii. 9 : ἀλλ' αὐτὸς ἔσωσεν αὐτοὺς διὰ τὸ ἀγαπᾶν αὐτοὺς καὶ φείδεσθαι αὐτῶν αὐτὸς ἐλυτρώσατο αὐτοὺς κ.τ.λ.

To these we may add Jer. xxxi. (lxx. 38) 3 *seq.* : Ἀγάπησιν αἰώνιον ἡγάπησά σε κ.τ.λ., where all the rest of the chapter (cf. esp. v. 34) leads up to or describes a process of restoration and forgiveness. So also Hos. xi. 1 *seq.*

Passing to the New Testament we may select as typical examples of the attribution of forgiveness to love or compassion as its motive :—

Lc. i. 77 (v. *supr.*) : τοῦ δοῦναί γινώσιν σωτηρίας—ἐν ἄφεσει ἁμαρτιῶν—διὰ σπλάγχνα ἐλέους Θεοῦ ἡμῶν, where σπλάγχνα ἐλέους may be regarded as a designation of love manifesting itself in the special form of ‘compassion.’

Mt. xviii. 27 : σπλαγχνισθεὶς δὲ ὁ κύριος τοῦ δούλου—ἀπέλυσεν αὐτὸν καὶ τὸ δάνειον ἀφῆκεν αὐτοῦ.

Cf. Rom. v. 5 (and context) and perhaps Gal. v. 6 : πίστις δι’ ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη.

That restraint of compassion connotes absence of love is evident from 1 Jo. iii. 17 : ὅς δ’ ἂν ἔχη τὸν βίον τοῦ κόσμου καὶ θεωρῇ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ χρεῖαν ἔχοντα καὶ κλείσῃ τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ, πῶς ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ μένει ἐν αὐτῷ. Thus we are justified in using, as evidence of the relation of love to forgiveness, sentences where σπλάγχνα, ἔλεος, or σπλάγχνα ἐλέους, is given as the motive.

Apoc. i. 5 : τῷ ἀγαπῶντι ἡμᾶς καὶ λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν—κ.τ.λ. Cf. Jo. iii. 16-18 : οὕτω γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἡγάπησεν τὸν κόσμον ὥστε—κ.τ.λ. 1 Jo. iv. 9-11 : ἐν τούτῳ ἐφανερώθη ἡ ἀγάπη τ. θεοῦ—κ.τ.λ.; where, though ‘forgiveness’ is not actually named, the work of redemption of men from the guilt and power of sin is the theme directly linked with that of the love of God.

The sequel of the verses last cited from the First Epistle of St. John infers that we, recipients of such love from God, are bound to love one another ; and thus suggests that nothing less than love must be the motive enabling us to forgive one another. This we might equally infer from other passages of the New Testament, as Mt. xviii. 35, ἀπὸ τῶν καρδιῶν κ.τ.λ., and especially 1 Pet. iv. 3, ὅτι ἀγάπη καλύπτει πλῆθος ἁμαρτιῶν.

But it is in St. Paul's great chapter on the functions of love (ἀγάπη) in 1 Cor. xiii., that the dependence upon love of true forgiveness between man and man is most emphatically, though without use of the word 'forgiveness,' exhibited: a passage in which, it may be noted, the negative delineation of forgiveness sometimes found in the prophets (as in Ezek. xviii. 22) finds its consummation.

'Love,' says the Apostle, not only 'is not provoked' (οὐ παροξύνεται), but, further, οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακὸν—'taketh no account of the evil'—that is ignores, so far as he who loves is affected, any and every element of offence or injurious provocation that may yet reside in the personality and character of the beloved brother.

Even so did God 'in Christ' love men, 'not reckoning unto them their trespasses' (2 Cor. v. 19).

7. *Consequences of Forgiveness.*

It scarcely belongs to the present enquiry to consider the *consequences* of forgiveness.

These consequences would seem to be, in summary :

- (a) Justification in the sight of God : when the forgiveness is Divine.
- (β) Joy in the heart of him who forgives, and in the heart of him who is forgiven.
- (γ) In the case of Divine forgiveness of man, also 'an inheritance among the sanctified' (Acts xxvi. 17, cf. Col. i. 12).
- (δ) In the case of human forgiveness, a restoration of brotherhood and brotherly feeling.

As regards the first of these consequences it may be sufficient, in view of the abundant discussion of this topic in all ages from the point of view of 'Justification,' to make reference to the most recent treatment of the last-named term and the Pauline teachings associated with it by Professor Sanday and Mr. Headlam in their *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, especially in their concise summary of the history of the interpretation of the Pauline term 'justification' (pp. 147-153).

For, though unable to go with them the length of identifying¹ 'justification' with 'forgiveness,' I am glad to find myself not very far from them ; justification being, according to my reading of the data, one and an immediate consequence of forgiveness, when the forgiveness is forgiveness of men by God.²

And on the whole question of consequences it may be observed that it is guilt and not, primarily at all events or necessarily, the direct consequences of wrongdoing which 'forgiveness' is, in the New Testament, conceived as removing.

¹ 'It [Justification] is simply Forgiveness, Free Forgiveness.'—*Commentary on Epistle to the Romans*, p. 36.

² *v. supr.* p. 69.

8. *Forgiveness in Parable.*

We have seen that while *sin* is the object-matter of forgiveness, forgiveness, if real, presupposes repentance and expresses love.

These spiritual truths are illustrated by that unique parable which without naming *describes* forgiveness more clearly than any other story ever told, the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

In that parable is depicted the sin, and the forgiveness, of a normal, and therefore typical sinner. By this I do not mean that it is, or ever was, a particularly common thing for young men so situated to pursue the course of conduct ascribed to the spendthrift son. Such conduct is just sufficiently common to make the picture intelligible to every generation, but no more. My meaning is that the conduct delineated, up to the moment of the prodigal's repentance, represents with singular precision the ordinary, normal, measure of our ingratitude towards God our Father. We take His gifts, we go away from Him and squander them, and we are content for long periods to live without Him. Some of us, by grace of the parable or otherwise, have learned day by day to return to Him and from our heart to say 'Father, I have sinned.' But this is of His grace. That withdrawn, most men would be as was the prodigal at one stage or another of his riotous living.

There was nothing peculiarly infamous or revolting about his sin. He had not committed murder, or theft, or false witness, or even, so far as we know, adultery. It is not said that he hated or reviled his father. He was a common, heedless, licentious, uncalculating sensualist—without self-restraint and without malevolence. He had strayed away lawlessly from the paths of wisdom and virtue. He had ‘sinned’ in the simplest and, if we may so say, least elaborate manner. There was in his conduct that element which is common to all sin, that and little more. He had ‘gone astray’—like the rest of us.

His repentance may, therefore, be taken as an example of that which is normally indispensable. It represents, that is, the minimum rather than the maximum. The case of the prodigal son is not, like that of the ‘dying thief,’ an extreme case, not at any rate in the same sense. It is not from this parable that we should draw evidence to illustrate the truth, however true it may be, that even the vilest and most atrocious malefactor may, if penitent, obtain pardon. No one parable illustrates everything. So far as wretchedness goes, the prodigal son was, no doubt, *in extremis* when he repented. But so far as sinning goes, it would be unsafe to take the story of his sinning and repentance, and the sequel of that story, as a guide to God’s mode of dealing with habitual and life-long violators of the great commandments of the moral law, deliberate enemies and persecutors of Christ and of His truth, wilful lovers of falsehood and workers of

unrighteousness. It would be unsafe to infer that for such there will be, on the morrow of their tardy repentance, a killing of the fatted calf and a joyous welcome and festal music in the father's house.

But, viewed as a picture of that ordinary waywardness and pleasure-loving forgetfulness of God, of which few of us are not more or less often guilty, while to some the path thus trodden leads on and on into depths of misery till all except the soul itself is lost, the parable is for all time a great charter of salvation. For it tells of forgiveness, free, absolute, and instant, of forgiveness flowing from the boundless love of God with a certainty dependent only on the penitence of the wanderer.

B.—THE UNFORGIVEN STATE AND THE LAW OF
RETRIBUTION.

- (1) *Sin, Suffering, and Retribution as objects of
experience and moral intuition.*

A determination of the nature of forgiveness determines also the dominant characteristics of the unforgiven state.

Penitence for sin being the objective condition of forgiveness or 'remission' of sins, it follows that the impenitent man is and remains unforgiven.

Love being the subjective condition of forgiveness, it follows that the man who is outside the operation of love is and continues unforgiven.

The object-matter of forgiveness being ultimately sin, it is clear that privation of forgiveness connotes continuance of sin.

Sin unforgiven lives on.

Evil does not die by inanition.

Far from languishing, sin unforgiven is fertile and continually reproduces itself. It is not a mere shadow, a mere negation of light and goodness. It is indeed a darkness, but it is a positive darkness, noisome and pregnant.

Sin is lawlessness: and lawlessness unremoved by purgation or extrinsic destruction of the lawless

principle vaunts itself, and triumphs, and grows stronger and ever more and more insolent.

Sin causes suffering :—

(a) primarily *not* to the sinner, but to the innocent.

This is matter of experience. It is so obvious that it might scarcely seem to need stating. Yet the fact is constantly denied, sometimes explicitly, more often implicitly. Language is constantly held suggesting that it is usually the guilty, but occasionally the innocent, who suffer. And much artifice and ingenuity of reasoning is then employed to explain this ‘anomaly,’ to clear up the mystery, to ‘justify the ways of God to man.’ Such reasoning is inevitably fallacious. There is in one sense no anomaly in the suffering of the innocent. It is the normal fact. If we refrain from saying that it is ‘the law of the world,’ it is merely because we might seem by such a phrase to foreclose the hope of compensation, to deny beforehand that expectation of redress which, false or true, is the sole imaginable solace of tortured innocence.

The suffering of the innocent, and not of the guilty, is the normal fact of experience here and now. There is no anomaly. And there is no mystery. It is precisely that which was to be anticipated from the nature of sin, as presented in history and in revelation. Sin is aggressive. It never confines itself to mere idleness of indifference. Whether it takes the form of a sin of commission or of a sin of omission it always involves, at one stage or another of its realisation, mischief to another. It is never merely a defect ; it is

always more or less malignant. Therefore it is not mysterious but natural that others, not the sinner, should here and now suffer first and most. There is no mystery.

Attempted 'justification' of the ways of God, in this connexion at least, is futile. They are not the ways of God at all which, ultimately, are 'justified' by empirical expositors. They are the ways of sin, the ways of a power antagonistic to God, intolerant of God, and intolerable to God. It is indeed the Will and the work of God that evil, that sin, should produce its own and no other fruits; just as it is His Will, and a manifestation of His energy, that the seed of a poison-plant should produce a plant after its own kind and not a plant of another kind. Were it otherwise, the generic distinction between good and evil would be confounded. But, beyond this process of *development* of the evil germ, we may not trace back Divine authorship or speak of the Will of God in connexion with evil. It is noteworthy that in Is. xlv. 7, a passage used by Marcion to prove that the God of the Old Testament was not a good but an evil Being, a passage which has been a source of genuine and reasonable perplexity to many commentators —, the 'evil' (רע), of which Jehovah claims the authorship, is a concrete fruit or product, not a principle; it is opposed to שלום, to the well-being of peace and tranquillity. God made peace: because He is author of that of which peace is a product. God *made* the reverse of peace also, whether we call it war or disease or merely 'evil'; not, however, that He is the

Author of that of which *it* is a product, but because His laws elicit it from the foul and alien germ which He made not. Creation in 'Isaiah,' if not in Genesis, is evolution by the Spirit of Jehovah of concrete and harmonious consequents, foreseen and purposed by Him alone, from discrete and chaotic antecedents.

Sin, then, causes suffering—and primarily to the innocent. But—

(β) secondarily, and ultimately, to the sinner.

That this is so *occasionally* is matter of experience, that is to say of temporal knowledge. Even here in this world so marred by evil, even now in this time of travail and martyrdom of the saints of God, we see that occasionally suffering, self-caused, overtakes the sinner in some proportion to his sin. More often he suffers the consequences not of his own sin but of the sin of some fellow-sinner ; and if his sin be of a character to incur the disapprobation of the particular society whose verdict affects him, the result is sometimes hailed as a just retribution.

But it is entirely useless and disingenuous to pretend that sin necessarily brings punishment, in this visible order, to the sinner—either extrinsic or intrinsic. The political sanction operates only against certain crimes, and its execution depends upon the survival of formal evidence. The social sanction is utterly capricious, and constantly if not normally condemns the innocent and acquits the guilty. And as to the moral sanction, that of conscience, it fails just where it is most needed. The supremely wicked man is,

normally, happy in his success, happy in the reputation of goodness which his hypocrisy has acquired. It is only the comparatively innocent who have any 'conscience of sin.' There is not a tittle of evidence to sustain the poetic fiction of the thoroughly wicked man suffering here and now the pangs of a bad conscience. If he is only wicked enough he need, as a rule, fear no human vengeance ; other fear he knows not—in the present. Experience, then, shows at best that *occasionally* sin causes suffering to the sinner. That it does so *universally* is matter *not* of experience or temporal knowledge but of faith or transcendental knowledge. This faith or confidence has for the student of Christian theology two roots—of unequal strength.

(i) It is suggested by 'conscience,' by an intuitive consciousness of 'what ought to be and is not,' of what ought to befall, if it does not. This consciousness is not avowed, and apparently is not felt, by all men : and it is futile, in order to gain the questionable advantage of being able to allege a 'general consensus,' to assert the unprovable existence of such consciousness in all men. A physical fact is proved if seen by certain persons ; and is not disproved by the fact that other persons did not see it. And so analogously in the moral sphere. It may be that in a large world only a small minority 'see' the moral needfulness of the recoil of sin in the form of suffering upon the wicked, or have any keen vision or appreciation of the concept of Justice.

But so long as but one man feels within his heart a

stern, insatiate craving for a day of vindication, for a day when the proud, indecent triumph of successful wickedness shall be lashed into abject wailing and humbled into raging impotence,—Natural Theology is entitled to use that ‘earnest expectation’ not indeed as a proof, but as a dim pathetic foreshadowing of a ‘great far-off event,’ when the wicked ‘shall cease’—perforce—‘from troubling.’

(ii) Kindled by moral consciousness this faith, this confidence of hope, is confirmed by revelation.

It is confirmed—

(a) by the spirit of the Mosaic Law; inculcating that all moral transgression shall be punished;

(b) by the express language of the prophets; and finally

(c) by the words of Christ Himself, here, as ever, fulfilling the Law and the Prophets.

It will not be necessary to adduce proof of the two former facts just stated, namely that the Law and the Prophets denounce and threaten, nor to ‘explain’ the tone thus adopted.

It is the last fact which concerns us here.

(2) *The Teaching of Christ concerning Retribution and the Unforgiven State.*

What has sometimes been called the sternness of Christ's Teaching is but the unfaltering and authoritative constancy of His assertion, and application to specific forms of sin, of the one Law of Retribution.

(a) *Interrelation of the Laws of Retribution and Forgiveness.*

The Law of Retribution is the obverse of the Law of Forgiveness. The announcement of retribution is the counterpart of the Gospel of Forgiveness.

The invitation to repentance put forth by John the Baptizer is preceded by a reference to 'the coming wrath' (τῆς μελλούσης ὀργῆς). The Woes of the Gospel are complementary to the Beatitudes. A judicial blinding of those who love and choose the darkness is part of the function of Him Who 'gives sight to the blind.'

Condemnation of the self-righteous and impenitent transgressor of the moral law is recorded concurrently with the forgiveness of the penitent and humble. Antithetical to the consolation of the heavy-laden is the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. The wrath of God is contrasted with the love of God, the death of the soul with the life eternal.

Christ came 'to cast upon the earth' not peace but 'a sword,' not a calm and spurious reconciliation of good and evil, but a principle of discernment of spirits, of righteous judgment, severing the true from the false, the clean from the unclean, forgiving the repentant and condemning the rebellious.

Christ Jesus 'came into the world to save sinners,' but also 'to destroy the works of the devil.'

It should not then be surprising if great part of the utterances of Christ recorded by the Synoptic Evangelists and by St. John be found to be minatory or denunciative.

(b) *Testimony of the Synoptists—Unique position of*
'St. Matthew.'

As regards the Synoptists we find that, while many of these utterances occur in all alike, there are comparatively few which, preserved by the other two Evangelists, are not also preserved in some form by St. Matthew; on the other hand, we have a large number peculiar to St. Matthew.

This special concentration in St. Matthew's Gospel of the denunciative factor of the twofold message appears a natural consequence of the character of that Gospel. The Gospel of St. Matthew is pre-eminently the Gospel of the Kingdom—of 'the Kingdom of the Heavens'; and being such, is appropriately fraught with stern denunciation of that which belongs to the rival kingdom, to the dominion of the Evil One. It is in His

kingly office more than all, that the Christ must ultimately be revealed as the victorious antagonist of the Prince of Evil. And it was, therefore, very fitting and even necessary that that record of His earthly ministry which most continuously portrayed His work of salvation as the erection of a 'kingdom' should also contain the most ample delineations of His hostility to the powers of sin.

The position thus occupied in respect of the doctrine of retribution by St. Matthew renders an examination of the 'sayings' (λόγια) preserved by this Evangelist practically almost equivalent to a review of the whole Synoptic testimony.

(i) *The Law of Retribution and the Unforgiven State according to St. Matthew.*

The Sermon on the Mount (Mt. v.-vii.), which opens with the Beatitudes, soon passes into tones of solemn admonition. 'The savourless salt' shall be rejected (v. 15).

A series of grave, sad warnings is introduced by the important saying 'Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven' (v. 20). The Pharisees fulfilled the *letter* of the Mosaic law. Christ declares that the *spirit* of that law must be fulfilled by whoso would enter the Kingdom of Heaven or escape 'the Gehenna of fire' (v. 22, 29 *seq.*). The nature of the penalty thus indicated remains so

far obscure. It seems clear that the term 'the Gehenna of fire' (ἡ γέεννα τοῦ πυρός), like 'the Judgment' (ἡ κρίσις) and 'the Council' (τὸ συνέδριον), belongs entirely to the temporal order, to the imagery, that is to say, and not to the interpretation of this certainly parabolic section of the great Sermon. Two facts, indeed, are here definitely revealed concerning the eternal order :—

- (a) That penalties will be graded.
- (b) That it is badness of heart, not formal transgression, which will be the ground and measure of punishment.

The preventive or remedial self-mutilation enjoined (v. 29 *seq.*) seems to find partial interpretation in the Pauline doctrine of the mortification of the desires of the flesh.

Alms, prayer, fasting are declared valueless if practised in the ostentatious and ungentle spirit of the 'hypocrites' (vi. 2, 5, 16). The individual hearer is emphatically charged to beware lest 'the light which is in him' should be after all no light, but 'darkness.' The dreadful nature of such self-deception is indicated by the exclamatory inference, 'If then the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness' !

The moral impossibility of a divided allegiance, of an allegiance wavering between 'God' and 'Mammon,' the valuelessness of any attempt to make a compromise between good and evil by an indiscriminate devotion to the pursuit of wealth and pleasure, combined with a profession of godliness and orthodoxy, is declared in

the condensed parable beginning with the words, 'No one can serve (be bondsman of) two masters' (οὐδεὶς δύναται δυσὶ κυρίοις δουλεύειν).

A connexion between relentlessness in the sentences which we pass upon our fellowmen and the judgment which will be pronounced upon us hereafter is established by the profound and difficult section beginning 'Judge not, that ye be not judged' (Μὴ κρίνετε, ἵνα μὴ κριθῇτε). It is, perhaps, impossible to gauge the full significance of the rule here stated (ἐν ᾧ κρίνετε, κριθήσεσθε, καὶ ἐν ᾧ μέτρω μετρεῖτε, μετρηθήσεται ὑμῖν) or to tell how far the law of reciprocity relates to this world, how far to the unseen. The tendency rebuked is commonly taken to be censoriousness. But no such application of the words to this particular form of 'judging' can be shown to exhaust their meaning.

Whatever be that meaning, it appears to be limited by the injunction which follows: 'Give not that which is holy to dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they sometime trample them beneath their feet and turn and rend you' (Μὴ δώτε τὸ ἅγιον τοῖς κυσίν, μηδὲ βάλητε τοὺς μαργαρίτας ὑμῶν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν χοίρων, μή ποτε καταπατήσωσιν αὐτοὺς ἐν τοῖς ποσὶν αὐτῶν καὶ στραφέντες ῥήξωσιν ὑμᾶς). The characterisation of those here indirectly condemned is sternly absolute; and it is manifest that we cannot but ask ourselves, 'Who are the dogs to whom our holy things may not be given? and who the swine before whom our precious things may not be cast?'

The presence, in the first clause, of the words τὸ ἅγιον,

‘the holy thing,’ forbids us to treat the whole as a mere parable from nature, intended only to remind us of the general duty of caution. A parable from nature it is; but the physical imagery is at one point superseded by the object imaged, and thus a key is given to the interpretation of the whole. The dogs—the dogs of Syria—feed on garbage, and it is ‘clean food,’ which no wise man would waste upon them : any more than he would expect his swine to recognise and respect the value of the pearls which are his choicest merchandise.

And so in things spiritual—there are those to whom it were worse than useless to offer as nourishment holy doctrine : like the dogs, they will not distinguish it from refuse ; like the swine, they will trample upon it and will turn in stupid fury upon the donors. But who are these dogs, these men of swinish heart, who, revelling in their hogwash, resent all interruption and spurn the choicest gifts ? We may not perhaps venture to identify them with any class of persons more definite than that which is already indicated by the qualities connoted in the allegory. They prove their species by their conduct and language. To the ‘poor’ and to the humble the gospel is to be preached ; but not to the vulgar-minded and self-satisfied despiser of all that is pure and lovely, not to the aggressive and fetidly malevolent persecutor of the apostles and prophets of truth. God’s gifts are worse than wasted upon such : they merely excite foul and blasphemous assaults upon the messenger of peace and upon the holy message which he bears. This does not of course mean that the

missionary of Christ should never expose his life to danger by going among fierce and barbarous tribes. Such tribes contain, we have reason to believe, individuals of various moral types ; of whom some may be by personal character predisposed, while others may by special experience be inclined and, as we are entitled to assume, divinely selected to hear and receive the word preached by the fearless ambassador of Christ. To them, to such, it is rightfully preached and fruitfully at whatever cost. God has his chosen vessels everywhere, to whom the dying words of a St. Stephen may be the prelude of a glorious conversion. But it is one thing thus to go among men of whom some may prove to be willing recipients and others relentless and cruel adversaries of the message : it is another thing to offer the holy gift directly and individually to those who have already manifested an absolute and continuous hostility to all that is holy and pure and beautiful.

The section vii. 15-23 contains a series of warnings which connect themselves partly by resemblance, partly by contrast, with those just considered. Wolves in sheep's clothing may be known not by superficial inspection but by observation of their 'fruits.' The badness of the fruits is proof conclusive of the badness of the stock—a declaration which emphatically discourages loose language concerning the alleged possibility of evil arising out of excess of good, and the converse derivation of good results from evil data. The fate of the individual life that brings forth no good fruit

is described at *v. 19*: 'such a tree' is 'rooted up and cast into (the) fire.' Lip-service is contrasted with real service (*ὁ λέγων—ὁ ποιῶν*), nominal with real piety (*vv. 21, 22*): and the doom of the iniquitous formalist 'in that day' is announced to be dismissal from the presence of the Lord (*ἀποχωρεῖτε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ, οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν*).

The Discourse is then concluded with one more brief parable of contrast, in which 'hearing and doing' is opposed to 'hearing and not doing.' He who hears and does not is at the mercy of wind and flood. Instability in profession of the faith, inconstancy under pressure of temporal trials, rather than eternal ruin, seem denoted by this imagery. Yet such instability and inconstancy lead on to an inward moral anarchy which, unretrieved, has issues, what issues we may not surely know, beyond those that are visible.

At *viii. 10 seq.*, the faith of the centurion, whose servant the Lord Jesus healed, becomes the occasion of a new and striking prophecy against the Jewish nation. Not only shall Gentiles be among those nearest in honour to the greatest of the patriarchs 'in the kingdom of the heavens,' but 'the sons of the kingdom,' those who (as in *Jo. viii.*) reflected so complacently that Abraham was their father, shall be excluded, cast forth into the outer darkness. 'There shall be the wailing,' the true wailing, and 'the gnashing of teeth,' the true despair.

At *x. 14 seq.*, is uttered a prophetic condemnation of those who shall reject the peaceful missionaries of Christ (*καὶ ὅς ἂν μὴ δέξηται ὑμᾶς κ.τ.λ.*). Of such

village-communities the doom in the 'day of judgment' (*ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κρίσεως*) shall be heavier than that of the impure cities of the plain, whose primeval destruction had been, throughout the Old Testament, a standing type of the operation of Divine vengeance.

The emissaries are warned that they will be as 'sheep among wolves,' 'hated of all men,' for the name of Christ and persecuted from city to city of Israel (*vv. 16-22*). The rejection and persecution here foretold seem confined definitely to the history of the early Church in the age previous to the destruction of Jerusalem and the old order (*v. 23*). The disciples are exhorted to fear 'him that is able to destroy in Gehenna both body and soul,' and not to be afraid of 'them that kill the body but cannot kill the soul' (*x. 28*).

Furthermore they are warned (*v. 37*) to love no kinsman, however near, more than Christ. The ties of physical nature must give way before the ties of spiritual adoption. Yes, and not only kindred, but self, the very life or soul of the individual disciple, must be counted of no value in comparison with Christ. Each follower of the Christ, like his Master, must 'take up his cross' of pain and humiliation. Self-devotion, and not self-preservation, is to be the ruling principle of the action of the servant of the Christ.

The severity of some of these injunctions has often caused difficulty :—especially when they seem to traverse the instincts of filial affection and the spirit of the Fifth Commandment. It is wrong to evade the difficulty,

which in truth disappears as soon as it is faced and examined.

Christ 'came not to cast peace upon the earth, but a sword' (v. 34). He came to make a new, great, severance, which should supersede all others. The great division of mankind would henceforth be not between family and family, class and class, Jew and Gentile, bond and free, but between those who truly accept and those who truly reject—the Christ: and this division must necessarily cut across families as well as across nations and tribes. The question then must arise, Which tie shall prevail? that of domestic kinship or that of Christian discipleship? And the answer is absolute. The enemies of Christ—that is to say, those who hate Christ—must be, so far forth, enemies of His disciples. Like other enemies they must be in one sense 'loved': yet in comparison of Christ they must be 'hated.' The antinomy, like others in the Gospels, must be accepted as absolute in the temporal order: in the eternal order it is transcended by that 'Love of God' which (excepting only sin itself) reconciles *all* things that in space and time are unreconciled.

Careful observation of the facts of life confirms the moral value of these startling precepts. Πολεμοῦμεν ἵνα εἰρηνεύωμεν. The merely neutral is never a peace-maker. The man who out of consideration for the feelings of a kinsman hostile to Christ foregoes His service, who affects to serve both sides equally or alternately, or who is passively neutral in the great warfare, effects no good, promotes no real peace, and by his faithless coldness

loses all chance of really reconciling to His Lord the man for whose temporal and immediate regard he has bartered his loyalty.

But if it is important to maintain, and to illustrate by observation, the duty of making in the service of Christ no compromise with the enemies of Christ, it is equally important to hazard no hasty hypothesis as to what constitutes enmity or what constitutes service. If a man or woman, deserting kindred or friends, enters a monastery or convent, such action may or may not be an exemplification of the stern duty here enjoined. To take for granted that it is so, or that it is not so, is a quite arbitrary and unauthorised assumption. If a man persistently promulgates to his kinsmen and friends as 'the truth' a particular view of Christianity or a special interpretation of the Gospel to the exclusion of other modes and interpretations more acceptable to those whom he treats as no Christians, his attitude may or may not be a realisation of Christ's command.

The ambiguity of the case is due mainly to the fact that profession has no permanent relation to real service. It is very certain that many, who regularly year after year take the name of Christ upon their lips and exhibit fastidious horror of the atheist, the agnostic, the heretic, the 'schismatic,' or the 'unbeliever,' nevertheless act normally, and not by way of lapse, in unlimited defiance of His law. Phrase-mongers, adept in the craft of religious diplomacy, they use the shibboleths and wear the insignia of His service; but their fruits betray them: they judge not righteous judgment, they have

respect unto 'persons' (πρόσωπα), they consort with wealthy and fraudulent extortioners : and they practise, under cover of the Christian profession, every vice, except perhaps fornication, which the most avowed enemy of the faith could desire to indulge. On the other hand, it is impossible not to suspect, and there is nothing in the New Testament to discountenance the hypothesis, that among those who in words reject the name of Christian and, as they say and think, the doctrines (or 'dogmas') of Christianity, there are many who yet 'do' the words of Christ (Mt. vii. 24, *v. supr.* p. 107). Morally sensitive, they loathe the immorality of the 'Christians' whom they have known ; and in the bitterness of their indignation they refuse, it may be, the ministrations of some genuine but ill-instructed confessor of Christ, who confuses the caution of honest and conscientious scepticism with the arrogance of real disbelief and meanwhile ignorantly or on prudential grounds condones and glosses the immorality of the 'false prophet' and the counterfeit confessor (Mt. vii. 15). If then in the larger associations of this life so much care is needed in distinguishing friends and foes of the Gospel, still greater vigilance and wisdom is called for in making the same distinction within the family and other intimate societies. Then and only then is it the duty of the servant of Christ to 'hate¹ father and mother,' when father and mother intervene

¹ The actual word 'hateth' (μισεῖν) occurs only in St. Luke's record (xiv. 26). But the language in St. Matthew implies as much.

to block out the Person of Christ, to divert the 'servant' from fulfilment of his charge, to tempt the disciple away from observance of the Master's precepts. It may be noted that the sacrifice actually made by the Syrian disciple in obedience to the injunction regarding parents (Mt. x. 37) would usually be not, if we may so say, a sentimental sacrifice of reciprocal pleasures of parental and filial tenderness, but a material sacrifice of heritage and worldly goods. Disharmony of the convert, rather than laceration of the heart of the parent, would be the typical consequence in an Oriental family of the entry into their midst of the sword of the word of Christ. It was this with its concomitant losses that the disciple must be ready to endure: and in translating the injunction of Christ into the forms of Western and modern thought we must be careful so to interpret and expound His words as to preserve their central purport.

The woes pronounced (xi. 20-24) upon Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum resume that prophecy of the destruction of the Jewish polity for the unbelief of its members and the rejection of the Messiah, which is so prominent throughout the Gospel of St. Matthew.

The revelation regarding 'blasphemy of the Spirit' (xii. 31 *seq.*) has been discussed above (p. 37 *seq.*).

In two of the Parables which occupy the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel the doom of the impenitent is expressly symbolised.

In the Parable of the Tares 'the master of the house' (οἰκοδεσπότης) announces that 'at harvest-time,' but not

before, he will bid the reapers, ere they gather the corn into his garner, collect the tares (τὰ ζιζάνια) and bind them into sheaves with a view to burning them. In Christ's interpretation of this parable He tells us that 'the tares' are 'the sons of the evil one' (*cf.* Jo. viii. 44), the enemy who sowed them being 'the devil';—while the 'reapers' are 'angels,' messengers sent by the Son of Man. The 'harvest-time' is ἡ συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος, the end or consummation of this world of space and time. 'Then shall the messengers of the Son of Man' gather out of the field of His Kingdom all the causes of stumbling and them that do iniquity; the words used being probably adopted from Zeph. i. 3: 'I will cut off the stumbling-blocks—the wicked.' These they shall then cast into 'the furnace (κάμινον) of the fire,' into that which in the eternal order corresponds, as a place of destruction, to the 'furnace-oven' of the parable. The extent to which the parabolic κάμιнос is to be taken as marking the character and mode of the eternal destruction of them that do lawlessness, the 'sins of the evil one,' has always been matter of deep questioning. It is limited by the sentence which immediately follows the words τὴν κάμινον τοῦ πυρός: '*There shall be the wailing and the gnashing of teeth.*' This sentence, as has been justly felt, seems to exclude any interpretation of the foregoing which so accentuates the term τοῦ πυρός as to import into the eternal order anything directly equivalent to a 'fiery furnace.' Yet having in view the doubtless equally parabolic phrase 'the Gehenna of fire' (v. 22, etc.) and the recurrence of similar imagery in the

symbolic prophecy of xxv. 31-46 *v. nf.*), we are compelled to accept as permanent, and not merely incidental to the imagery of a particular parable, the conception of ‘an eternal fire,’ of which temporal ‘fire’ is, if we may so speak, sacramental. Once definitively faced, this result appears to provide its own explanation. The ‘eternal fire, here symbolised by temporal fire, is not any instrument of punishment inflicted by the wrath of God. Eternal fire *is* the wrath of God. And we are perhaps still within the legitimate limits of allegoric exegesis if we add that the furnace is a localisation of the wrath of God.

In the parable of the good and bad fish the teaching of the parable of the wheat and tares appears to be repeated without essential addition. The recurrence of the symbol ‘the furnace of fire’ shows again the permanent importance of the concept of fire in connexion with retribution: and the interpretation is limited exactly as in the parable last noticed (ἐκεῖ ὁ καὶ ὁ θμὸς κ.τ.λ.). The antithesis here is οἱ πονηροὶ καὶ οἱ δίκαιοι, ‘the wicked’ and ‘the righteous.’

The nature of that which defiles, which makes a soul unclean and therefore obnoxious to the fire of the wrath of God, is determined by the interpretation of the brief parable addressed specially (xv. 11 *seq.*) to the Pharisees who had accused the disciples of neglecting ‘the tradition of the elders’ in the matter of ritual ablutions. ‘Not that which goeth into a man, but that which cometh out of a man, defileth.’ Not ‘eating with unwashed hands,’ but ‘evil thoughts,

murders, adulteries, fornication, theft, false witness, reviling (βλασφημίας).’

In xvi. 24-28 the need of absolute self-devotion in the disciple is again inculcated in the same terms as in chapter x.—a clear instance of that repetition of parts of a discourse noted above as a fact to be admitted. ‘He who would follow’ must ‘take up his cross.’ Whoso ‘seeks to save his life (or “soul”)’ shall lose it: whoso shall have lost his life (ψυχὴν) for Christ’s sake shall gain it (εὕρῃσει), find it safe and unharmed.’ And who can hesitate? such seems the connexion of the sequel—who can hesitate which to choose? ‘What shall a man be advantaged (in the eternal order) though (in the temporal) he have gained the whole world at cost of loss of (or “to”) his own soul’ (v. 26).

These exhortations are crowned by the definite assurance that the Son of Man Himself shall come—shall even within the temporal life-time of some of his hearers begin to come—no longer in humiliation, no longer in the form of a servant, but in the glory of the Father, in the manifested Majesty of His co-essential Godhead, accompanied by His ‘messengers’—His angels; and then shall institute a court of recompense, ‘rendering to each man according to his deeds’ (xvi. 27).

The destruction, forty years later, of the city which was no longer the true Jerusalem or worthy to be its symbol, the demolition of the House designed to be a House of Prayer (Mt. xxi. 13) sacred to Jehovah, but

in fact a 'den of robbers,' the extinction of the impenitent hierarchy which had ignored the voice of God and had compassed the death of the Messiah, may well be regarded as a first and crucial moment in the manifestation of the retributive justice of God, revealed in the Person of the Risen and Ascended Christ.

In the section Mt. xviii. 1-7 two new lessons of evangelic warning are imparted.

- (a) None can enter the 'kingdom of heaven' except he first become as a little child, and
- (b) Dark beyond description is his doom who, not content with being himself proud and disobedient, shall tempt or vex or cause to stumble one of these little ones who believe on—who cast themselves continually in child-like and self-surrendering trust upon—the Christ, their Lord and Saviour (*ἐνα τῶν μικρῶν τούτων τῶν πιστευόντων εἰς ἐμέ*). Causes of stumbling (*τὰ σκάνδαλα*) must needs come in a world stained with evil, a world liable to the assaults of the evil one. But 'woe' unto the man by whom—unto the man through whose ministry in each instance—the cause of stumbling comes.

And then is repeated with some variation the solemn counsel of v. 29 *f*.

It is better, we are told, to sacrifice a member, to mortify temporally any part of the self which may prove itself a minister of stumbling than retaining the

member—indulging the passion—to ‘be cast into the eternal fire,’ the fire of the wrath of God.

In xviii. 15, members of the Christian brotherhood are bidden to rebuke one another for sin—first privately, then with one or two witnesses, lastly through the agency of the Church corporate. If finally impenitent, the offender is to be regarded as ‘the alien and the tax-gatherer’ is regarded by the Israelite (ὥσπερ ὁ ἐθνικὸς καὶ ὁ τελώνης).

These words appear certainly to sanction and enjoin the practice under special circumstances, of ‘excommunication.’ It is to be remarked :

- (α) that the final agency of *remonstrance* is that of the corporate ‘Ecclesia’ ;
- (β) that it is the *individual* Christian (ἔστω σοι) who is to disown the impenitent transgressor ;
- (γ) that unless v. 18 be taken as merely a promise appended to the preceding passage (15-17), nothing is said of ‘spiritual censures’ to be passed upon the excommunicate ;
- (δ) That moral transgression (ἐὰν—ἁμαρτήσῃ), persisted in after repeated remonstrance (ἐὰν δὲ—παρακόνσῃ αὐτῶν), and not misconception of the Nature and Person of Christ, or other heresy, appears to be intended.

As regards the third point (γ) we cannot indeed doubt that there is *some* significance in the juxtaposition of the doctrine of corporate remonstrance (vv. 15-17) and the doctrine of corporate prayer and intercession (vv. 18 20), where the promise as to binding and

loosing, given after the Resurrection (Jo. xx. 23, *v. supr.*), is anticipated, whether in the actual teaching of the Lord or in St. Matthew's arrangement of his record of that teaching. But this fact does not justify the assumption that such remonstrance, or any excommunication ensuing thereon, is in nature or effect identical with the act of binding or retaining to which the promise of *v. 18* applies. Sufficient reason for the juxtaposition is found in the indubitable fact that both sections contain a clear recognition of the Christian Society or Church having corporate functions.

The parable of the unmerciful servant (xviii. 21-34), which immediately follows, is completed by the warning (*v. 35*) that before God, as before the Master (ὁ κύριος) in the parable, the merciless shall find no mercy:—

‘So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every man his brother from your hearts’ (οὕτως καὶ ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ οὐράνιος ποιήσει ὑμῖν ἔαν μὴ ἀφῆτε ἕκαστος τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν καρδιῶν ὑμῶν).

But the merciless are those who refuse mercy to the suppliant debtor, not those who decline to acquit the impenitent.

Exclusion from the Kingdom of Heaven or from the Presence of God, if not actually identical with retribution, stands in such obviously close relation with the doctrine of retribution, that, in considering the unforgiven state, we may fitly take note of all passages where such exclusion is mentioned.

The cardinal truth ‘Ye cannot serve God and Mammon’ (Mt. vi. 24) is illustrated (xix. 16-22) by the story

of the young man who, having good wealth, loved it too well to obey the command of Christ; and further by the seemingly paradoxical declaration, so full of perplexity to many minds, so easy to understand if accepted in its undiluted simplicity:—*εὐκοπώτερον ἐστὶν κάμηλον διὰ τρήματος ραφίδος εἰσελθεῖν ἢ πλούσιον εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ*:—‘Easier it is for a camel to pass through a needle’s eye than for a rich man to pass into the Kingdom of Heaven.’

There is nothing here to indicate that every rich man who would serve Christ must sell all his goods and give the proceeds to the poor; but much to show

- (α) that no Christian can retain an absolute property in his temporal goods. They are not *his*, but are to be used as subject to the commandments of Christ;
- (β) that the poor, as such, have corporately a *claim* on the benevolence of the Christian rich (*cf.* 1 Jo. iii. 17), a claim, which, disregarded, disqualifies the ‘rich’ man for citizenship in ‘the kingdom’;
- (γ) that, in other words, the rich man must, if he would enter the kingdom, ‘become poor’ in the sense defined.

The parable of ‘the marriage-feast of the King’s Son’ (Mt. xxii. 1-14) ends with a statement of the doom of the guest who had refused to wear the ‘wedding-garment’ (*ἐνδυμα γάμου*) provided for him. His insulting presumption was punished by extrusion from the royal presence and the joy of the feast, bound

like a felon, 'into the darkness without.' And the recurrence of the phrase ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων seems to equate the doom here symbolised with that symbolised in preceding parables by 'the fire.' Twice more in the Gospel of St. Matthew the fatal end occurs: once at the close of the parable of the talents, where the unprofitable servant, as here the rebellious and impure guest, is cast 'into the outer darkness' (τό σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον); once at the end of the earlier and semi-parabolic picture of 'that wicked servant,' who, saying in his heart, 'my master tarrieth,' shall be surprised amidst his revelry and career of violence and outrage by the Advent of His Lord, and receive 'his portion with the hypocrites' (24-51).

The sentence 'There shall be the wailing and the gnashing of teeth' is thus found six times altogether in St. Matthew, namely at the close, respectively—

- (1) of the warning that many Gentiles shall exclude 'sons of the kingdom' in the 'kingdom of heaven': Mt. viii. 12.
- (2) of the interpretation of the parable of the tares: Mt. xiii. 42.
- (3) of the parable of the net of good and bad fishes: Mt. xiii. 50.
- (4) of the parable of the wedding-feast of the King's Son: Mt. xxii. 13.
- (5) of the account of the wanton vicegerent of the household: Mt. xxiv. 51.
- (6) of the parable of the unprofitable (mercantile) servant: Mt. xxv. 30.

No parable is, perhaps, more difficult truly to interpret than the parable of the Ten Virgins (Mt. xxv. 1-14). The foolish virgins, who are ultimately shut out, appear to symbolise loyal, though indolent, followers of Christ. No great sin against the moral code is imputed to them. Yet they seem to be left in the outer darkness, although the words do not actually occur at the close of this, as they do at the close of the succeeding parable, that of the unprofitable servant: whose conduct indeed, in its negativeness, bears much resemblance to that of the foolish virgins.

The only line of exegesis which at all satisfies the moral perplexity thus occasioned is that which finds an express interpretation of this and the next parable in the symbolic revelation of xxv. 31-46. On this view the series of minatory parables preserved in chapters xxii., xxiv., and xxv. is crowned by an apocalyptic picture of that great final scene of requital at the judgment-seat of the Son of Man, of which a partial and condensed forecast was given in xvi. 27.

If that earlier and briefer statement was placed in special connexion with a prophecy of the dissolution of the Jewish polity and church, this later and fuller picture of the Judgment of Christ, seated upon the Throne of His Glory, embraces 'all the nations of the world.' The 'goats' are they who have wilfully neglected to give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothing to the naked, or to visit the captive, among any of the least of Christ's 'brethren.' The doom here, as in the parables of the tares, of the net,

and in xviii. 8, is 'the eternal fire' (τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον). But the added words—'which is prepared for the devil and his messengers (angels)'—at once link this revelation and the series of parables of which it is a consummation with all that is elsewhere revealed concerning the agency of the Evil One, and especially with the argument of the eighth chapter of St. John's Gospel.

It is, therefore, of the utmost importance to observe what the *sin* of the 'goats' really is. And as to this no sort of doubt can exist. The sin of 'the goats' is *mercilessness*, mercilessness in reference to the poor and the needy.

If now in the light of this revelation we return to the parable of the virgins and interpret the negligence of the 'foolish virgins'—and likewise the negligence of the 'unprofitable servant' (xxv. 14 *seq.*)—*as wilful neglect of the primary duties of humanity and Christian benevolence*, the conduct symbolised will in each case be parallel to that of 'Dives' in the prophetic allegory recorded by St. Luke (c. xvi.), and fitly comes under the condemnation summarily stated by the same apostle elsewhere (1 Jo. iii. 17), ὅς δ' ἂν ἔχη τὸν βίον τοῦ κόσμου καὶ θεωρῇ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ χρεῖαν ἔχοντα καὶ κλείσῃ τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ πῶς ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ μένει ἐν αὐτῷ; The 'love of God abideth' not in such. But the absence of the Love of God Who is also Light, leaves the loveless and the merciless in 'outer darkness.'

In what relation that 'outer darkness' stands to 'the fire which is eternal' may still remain beyond solution.

The visitation of God, the presence, in whatever sense conceivable, in that darkness of Him Who essentially is Light, may not without reason be further conceived as converting the darkness into 'fire eternal.' The God Who is Light is also and therefore a consuming fire,' wherever sin or impurity is subjected to the visitation of His Presence.

The progressive Vision of Judgment thus granted by the Lord to His immediate followers is preceded in St. Matthew's Gospel by two great denunciative utterances ; the one (c. xxiii.) a rhythmic sequence of seven woes pronounced upon the Scribes and Pharisees ; the other (c. xxiv. 1-42) a prophetic forecast of 'the end' of the Jewish theocracy and the antitypal 'end' of the world. The latter utterance stands beyond critical exegesis, excepting in so far as the moral teaching to be drawn from it is concentrated in the quasi-parabolic section (xxiv. 45-51) already touched upon. As regards the denunciations of the Scribes and Pharisees (c. xxiii.) it may be noted,

- (a) that it is as 'hypocrites' that they are denounced throughout :
- (b) that each woe alights upon a new phase or species of the hypocrisy.

These species are

- (i) that they shut up in the face of men 'the kingdom of heaven,' of which they profess to be, and are officially, the doorkeepers : they neither enter themselves nor suffer others to enter (v. 14) ;

- (ii) ostentatious unreality is the making of proselytes ;
- (iii) hypocrisy in their distinction between binding and violable oaths and consecrations ;
- (iv) hypocrisy in their scrupulous tithing of minutiae to the neglect of ' judgment and mercy and faith ' (*vv.* 23, 24) ;
- (v) hypocrisy in their insistence upon external, with neglect of inward, cleanness (*v.* 25 *seq.*: ' full of rapine and incontinence ') ;
- (vi) hypocrisy in the outward decorum contrasted with the secret licence of their lives (*v.* 27 *seq.*) ;
- (vii) hypocrisy in their professed reverence for deceased, and persecution of living, prophets (*v.* 29 *seq.*).

The seventh and last woe passes into a brief prophecy of impending judgment to fall upon the existing generation. And then follows the Lament over the City. The whole of this utterance was public (τ.ὀχλοῖς καὶ τ. μαθηταῖς) ; whereas the detailed prophecies of c. xxiv. were spoken to the ' disciples ' only, as also was the group of discourses already discussed which extends from xxv. 43 to the end of c. xxv.

(ii) *Testimony of St. Mark.*

The Gospel of *St. Mark* contains but few words, not also recorded by St. Matthew, touching the law of retribution.

(1) At vii. 6 *seq.* the hypocrite Pharisees are identified with ‘the people’ (ὁ λαὸς), the rebellious Israel, concerning whom Isaiah had ‘prophesied,’ when he said and truly said (καλῶς) :—

Οὗτος ὁ λαὸς τοῖς χεῖλεσιν με τιμᾷ

ἢ δὲ καρδίᾳ αὐτῶν πόρρω ἀπέχει ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ·

μάτην δὲ σέβονται με

διδάσκοντες διδασκαλίας ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων.

The antithesis between worship of the lips and worship of the heart is, both in the citation and still more emphatically in the sentence of comment which follows—‘Leaving *the commandment of God* ye hold fast *the tradition of men*’—presented as substantially coincident with the antithesis between exclusive reverence for human tradition and reverence for the commandments of God. The substitution of the former for the latter is viewed as deliberate and dishonest (v. 9), καλῶς αθετεῖτε τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα παράδοσιν ὑμῶν τηρήσητε,—a verse which moreover brings out the fact not seldom overlooked by those who in general terms deprecate unreality and false standards, that the Divine law is not merely obscured and retrenched, but too often made utterly null and void by those who thus overlay it with artificial rules of their own devising.

(2) At xii. 40 the Scribes are ‘they who devour widows’ houses and for pretence make long prayers’: it is added ‘these shall receive greater sentence’ (κρίμα).

(iii) *Testimony of St. Luke.*

The Gospel of St. Luke has a somewhat larger number of such teachings peculiar to itself.

In Lc. vi. 20-26 we have four Beatitudes answered antistrophically by four Woes, pronounced respectively upon :

- (a) 'the rich' (ὁμῶν τοῖς πλουσίοις), who here in this life have in full all the consolation that they shall ever have, whereas the poor are heirs of 'the kingdom of God.'
- (b) 'them that are full' here and now (οἱ ἐμπεπλησμένοι νῦν), who in the new order shall 'hunger,' whereas they that hunger now shall then 'be filled.'
- (c) them that 'laugh' and are merry here and now (οἱ γελῶντες), who then shall mourn and weep (πενθήσετε κ. κλαύσετε), whereas they that weep, they that wail now, shall then laugh and be glad.
- (d) them that are, here and now, well spoken of by men in general (οἱ ἀνθρώποι), as were the *false* prophets of old, whereas they who are hated, discomfited, insulted and slandered here and now (v. 22), shall have in heaven (ἐν οὐρανῷ) abundant recompense (ὁ μισθὸς ὁμῶν καλῶς), even the recompense of those *true* prophets who were similarly treated in former generations.

The occurrence in *St. Luke's* Gospel of these bitter denunciations disproves satisfactorily the hypothesis that the severity of so many of the great, *λόγια* recorded at length, and sometimes exclusively by St. Matthew, reflects the temperament of the individual Apostle rather than the authentic spirit of the Master.

And the significance of this fact is not diminished when we observe that the Woes of St. Luke are closely followed by the most exacting and universal precepts of love, forbearance, and equity, ever spoken by Christ (vi. 27, *seq.*). 'Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you.'

'As ye would that men should do unto you (*ὡς ἂν ποιῶσιν ὑμῖν οἱ ἄνθρωποι*) do ye to them likewise.'

'Be ye pitiful even as your Father is pitiful; and judge not and ye shall not be judged; and condemn not and ye shall not be condemned.'

The law of loving forbearance, 'the duty of so regarding *our own* enemies and persecutors *as not to foreclose the chance of their repentance and forgiveness*, is here inculcated in instructive contiguity with the most unqualified assertion of the misery that in the eternal order shall be the portion of those who in the present world are insolently prosperous, triumphant and cruel.

The exhortation to patient long-suffering stands face to face with the assurance of ultimate redress.

In Lc. xi. 29, the 'wickedness' of 'this generation' (*ἡ γενεὰ αὐτῇ γενεὰ πονηρά ἐστιν*) or, as possibly the words

should be rendered, 'of this race,' is illustrated by their incredulous and ungentle pertinacity in demanding an outward physical sign of Him Whose Divine mission and authority had already been amply witnessed by His works and words. And the reference to 'the sign of the prophet Jonah' introduces the statement that 'in the judgment' Ninevites shall put to shame men of the chosen race, and so by comparison effect their condemnation. At v. 37 *seq.*, a distinction is drawn between Pharisees generally and lawyers (νομικοὶ). Of the latter, Christ says (xi. 52) 'Woe unto you, lawyers, for ye have taken the key of knowledge (τῆς γνώσεως), of the knowledge of the Will of God; ye entered not in yourselves, and hindered them that were ready to enter.'

In xii. 1, 2, we have the monition already treated in the investigation of the law of forgiveness (*supr.* p. 43) concerning 'the leaven, which is hypocrisy, of the Pharisees.' The parable of the 'rich fool' (in xii. 16, *seq.*) condemns self-complacent delight in material possessions regardless of things spiritual.

In St. Luke's version of the story of the wanton chief servant (xii. 46) the substitution of τῶν ἀπίστων for the τῶν ὑποκριτῶν of St. Matthew shows the ultimate identity of *disbelief* with *hypocrisy*.

The parable of 'the unfruitful fig-tree' (Lc. xiii. 6 *seq.*) teaches that the respite granted to the worthless is only for a time. The long-suffering of God will have an end.

The question (xiii. 23 *seq.*) 'Lord, are they few that

are saved (that escape) ' obtains from Christ no direct answer, but in lieu thereof the exhortation to strive hard to enter in through the narrow gate, forasmuch as 'many' shall, for lack of the needful effort and the needful sacrifice of encumbrances, seek and be unable (*οὐκ ἰσχύσουσιν*) to enter in. Once the door has been shut by the lord of the house (*οἰκοδεσπότης*), in vain shall they claim to have eaten and drunk in His presence, and that He had 'taught in their streets.' He will disclaim all knowledge of them as of 'all workers of injustice.' Here only in St. Luke or outside the Gospel of St. Matthew occurs (quoted from Ps. vi. 8) the phrase *ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων*.

The parable of 'the prodigal son' (xv. 11-32), that greatest parable of forgiveness, is balanced by the parable of 'the rich man and Lazarus' (xvi. 19-31), a parable of retribution.

The parables of 'the pounds' (xix. 12 *seq.*), and of 'the wicked husbandmen' (xx. 9 *seq.*), occupy in the Gospel of St. Luke a position analogous to that which in the Gospel of St. Matthew is occupied by the parables of 'the ten virgins,' and of 'the unprofitable servant.'

From the former we learn that strength and enlightenment is added, both in this present and in the eternal order—such seems the meaning of the parable—proportionably to the use which men severally make of the strength and light already possessed by them :—while the closing sentence *πλὴν τοὺς ἐχθροὺς μου τούτους τοὺς μὴ θελήσαντάς με βασιλεῦσαι ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἀγάγετε ὧδε καὶ κατασφάξατε αὐτοὺς ἔμπροσθέν μου* appears to teach us that

over and beyond the system of finite recompenses and deprivations previously indicated there is a distinct and absolute penalty of extermination, appropriate to a certain unique and unqualified state of sinfulness, having as its distinguishing note hatred of good as good. This inference, it is true, is (so far as regards this parable taken by itself) precarious, and ought not to be pressed; since the closing sentence may belong to the imagery only. But it accords with that which seems to be the clear doctrine of other parables and discourses, and cannot therefore be lightly set aside.

The latter parable, that of the ‘husbandmen,’ ends, after quotation of Ps. cxviii., with the words ‘every one who falleth upon that stone shall be bruised (συνθλασθήσεται), but on whoso it falleth, it shall grind him to dust (λικμήσει, literally, ‘shall winnow’). He who stumbles at Christ, and errs, shall suffer temporal, or perhaps we should rather say some sort of finite, chastisement. But Christ’s condemning sentence, as to the nature of which we learn something from St. John xii. 48 (*v. inf.*), shall annihilate him on whom it shall fall.

(c) *Testimony of St. John.*

The Law of Retribution according to the testimony of St. John has the same range as in the Synoptic Gospels. But that which by the Synoptists is presented in the concrete is stated by St. John in an abstract form. This difference in the mode of presentation, a difference which applies with certain reservations to the

whole content of the Gospels, is best illustrated by a simple mention of the sections relevant to the subject in the Gospel of St. John.

The doctrine of retribution is concentrated in the fifth, eighth, ninth, and twelfth chapters.

Of the fifth chapter as a source of the doctrine it is not necessary to speak separately. Its teaching may be regarded as a preliminary and institutional outline of the teaching which in the eighth, ninth, and twelfth chapters is differentiated and developed. Not that the former is in any way whatsoever superfluous, involved with and emerging from other teaching not elsewhere found regarding the nature of 'eternal life,' it constitutes an indispensable link in the structure of St. John's Gospel. But, for the purpose before us, it will be sufficient merely to cite the crucial words:—*ἐκπορευσόνται (οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις) οἱ τὰ ἄγαθα ποιήσαντες εἰς ἀνάστασιν ζωῆς, οἱ τὰ φαῦλα πράξαντες εἰς ἀνάστασιν κρίσεως*, and then pass on to those later chapters.

As regards the eighth chapter little need here be added to that which has been said above (p. 46) in discussing the limits of the law of Forgiveness.

In viii. 24 the Pharisees are warned that unless, repenting of their attitude, they believe that *He is* that which He has told them that He is, they shall 'die in their sins'; the moral disease which wraps them as in a leprosy shall at length be fatal and terminate in moral death.

The 'diabolic' origin of the spirit which they cherish is evidenced by their manifest hatred of words of truth

and by their murderous desire to destroy the speaker of truth.

Their hatred here, as in Galilee, is condensed and brought to the last point of deliberate malice in the attribution of the works and words of the great Healer and Teacher to the immanence of an unclean spirit.

In c. ix. is exhibited once more this blasphemous special pleading of moral and spiritual obscurantism.

They *know* that Jesus is a 'sinner.' In full view of the fact that He had given sight to the man born blind, they first try to deny the fact and, that failing, would force the man so healed to deny the source of his blessing. This obscurantism is probed and condemned by the Christ in the words: 'I came into this world to make a judgment (*εἰς κρίμα*),' to divide and sift, to the end 'that those who see not may see' (this being a ruling sign of the Messianic Presence and Function), and 'that they who see may become blind' (ix. 39). The word which gives light to those who, being blind, know and confess their need of light, also darkens and blinds the soul which, claiming to have light, claiming to know the truth already, rejects the true light, rejects the 'words of God,' the spoken truth, the evidence of moral and spiritual holiness incarnate in a sinless and beneficent life.

'Were they then really blind?' the Pharisees ask in astonishment and indignation. Not simply blind, else had they had no sin, but self-blinded by their own wilful preference of darkness to light, by their resolve to shut their eyes and say 'we see,' by their resolute

persistence in calling their darkness light and the light, offered to them by Christ in His own Person, darkness,—in calling evil good and good evil.

The antagonism between the powers of good and evil is at this point complete. Between the Christ and the official representatives of 'the Jews' there remains no point whatever in common.

The antithesis between the realms of Light and Darkness prevails henceforth throughout the Gospel of St. John. And the Pharisees remain (c. xii.) not merely passive inhabitants of the realm of Darkness, but active ministers of that kingdom—

(*a*) preventing, by threat of excommunication and otherwise, many of those who were attracted to the true Light from professing and realising their new faith (xii. 42 *seq.*).

(*β*) compassing the death of Him Who, being yet among them, was the Light of the World and had come as Light into the World (v. 46), in order that whoso believed on Him might *not* abide in the darkness.

What in the eternal order would be the issue of this unqualified antagonism? Not He Who, being the Light, came to save the world from the power of darkness, not He, but the word which He had spoken should judge them in the last day (xii. 48).¹

¹ ὁ λόγος δὲν ἐλάλησα ἐκείνος κρινεῖ αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ. cf. Westcott *ad* Jo. xii. 47: 'There is no personal element in the accomplishment of the final issue. Christ came for judgment (ix. 39), and yet not to judge (*cf.* iii. 17, viii. 15). The judgment followed naturally

That word, that message, is none other than a finite expression of the uttered Will of God, of the mandate given by God the Father to the Son Who revealed Him.

And the content of that mandate, of that commandment, *is* eternal life (*ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ ζωὴ αἰώνιος ἐστίν*).

Hence we learn that the gift of eternal life, being rejected itself, of necessity operates a spiritual severance of those who so reject and despise it from those who have accepted it.

But it is of the highest consequence to perceive what constitutes the rejection which is thus fatal.

Nothing can be more explicit than the words of Christ Himself on this point. ‘If I had not come and (palpably) spoken (*ἐλάλησα*) to them, they had not had sin. But, as it is, they have no excuse for (*περὶ*) their sin.’ They had hated Him Whom God had sent: and that was equivalent to hatred of the Father (*cf.* xv. 24). It was not that they had no evidence before their eyes: they had hated in spite of the evidence. ‘Had I not wrought among them works’—those my works—‘which no other man ever wrought, they had not had sin’ (xv. 24): there would have been the excuse that they could not know that He Who claimed to come from God had authority thus to speak. But, as it is, ‘they have both seen and have hated both Me and My Father.’

(so to speak) from His manifestation. The Law (in the fullest sense) is the one accuser (*v.* 45). Men simply remain where they are (*iii.* 36) if they do not come to Christ. Their sentence lies in the nature of things. In this case the hearers are self-condemned.’

And thus from St. John, as from the Synoptists, we learn that the typical and ultimate sin is that open-eyed hatred of the good as good, which uttered is βλασφημία τοῦ πνεύματος, which has for its root and source the personal activity of ‘the father of falsehood’ (Jo. viii. 44), which, being thus essentially a continuous ‘doing of untruth’ loved and chosen in preference to the truth, is among men ὑπόκρισις. This sin *is* itself eternal (Mc. iii. 29, true reading). It thus constitutes its own—eternal—punishment.

We can hardly doubt, even if we cannot demonstrate, that this is the sin of which St. John in his First Epistle speaks as unique, mortal, and past all intercession (1 Jo. v. 16): ἔστιν ἁμαρτία πρὸς θάνατον· οὐ περὶ ἐκείνης λέγω ἵνα ἐρωτήσῃ.

(d) *Testimony of the Apostolic Epistles.*

With regard to the unforgiven state and the Law of Retribution as it operates in the absence of Forgiveness it is hardly necessary for our present purpose, after examining the teaching of the Evangelists, to adduce the testimony of the authors of the Apostolic Epistles.

It was not the aim of the writers of these Epistles to preach repentance. No one of them is addressed to unbelievers, whether Jew or Gentile, or even to catechumens. The letters are, in every case, addressed to professedly Christian communities or individuals. In one or two of the ‘Epistles to the Churches’ which form the prelude to the Apocalypse the recipients are

rebuked as Christians who have, to a peculiar degree, lapsed morally and spiritually from the faith which they professed. But even so there is no occasion to do more than recall, in tones of grave warning, the truths regarding the position of the impenitent, which had been set forth for them in the first preaching of the Apostles and for us in the parables and discourses of the Lord as preserved in our written Gospels. Neither in these shorter, nor in the longer, Catholic or Pauline, Epistles is there, I think we may venture to say, any fundamental addition to, or any essential modification or abatement of, the teaching on this subject of the discourses of the Lord as presented to us in the Gospels. Speaking broadly, that teaching is neither superseded nor materially augmented in the canonical Epistles. It is presupposed, and it is, moreover, applied to contemporary events, actions, and persons.

The Epistle of St. James, while speaking of 'forgiveness' (v. 15) as obtainable by prayer, has no explicit mention of 'repentance.' But repentance is practically delineated in the hortatory passage (iv. 8-10), cited and adopted from Zech. i. 3, and addressed to 'proud' so-called Christians, whose lives flagrantly violated the law of the faith of Christ. 'Draw ye nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse ye your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be sorrowful and mourn.' Otherwise, in the absence, that is, of fit penitence and self-humiliation (ταπεινώθητε) before God, their opulent prosperity—that wanton self-

contented disregard of righteousness which led men just such as they are to falsely condemn, and murder, 'the Righteous One'—shall bring upon them miseries (*ταλαιπωρία*) and manifold ruin, the destruction of all that constitutes their happiness. There is here a marked reticence as to the scope of the punishment threatened. The ruin forecast may well be merely temporal.

But a deeper note is struck at ii. 12, where, after urging that the transgressor of any part of the Law is a transgressor of the Law as a whole and so 'liable,' and that oppression of the poor, or 'respect of persons' (*προσωποληψία*), is a transgression of the great inclusive royal law, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' the writer adds: 'To speak and so act as men about to be judged by a law of freedom,' a law that would seem to mean, which would before all things punish those who say that might is right and enslave. 'For the judgment is without mercy to him that did no mercy.' The exegesis of the section is difficult. But the doctrine as to retribution is clear. 'To the merciless no mercy.'

That the reference is to a more than temporal judgment, is rendered probable by the closing words of the Epistle: 'My brethren, if any man among you have strayed (*πλανήθῃ*) from the truth, and one convert him (*ἐπιστρέψῃ*), let him know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way—who turneth a sinner back from wandering out of the way—shall save his soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins.' The 'turning round' here contemplated is, on the side

of the wanderer, 'repentance.' The covering of sins implies forgiveness. The 'death' from which the man is saved is clearly no bodily dissolution, but some transcendental issue which, if he be not turned, will engulf him.

In the Epistle of St. Jude, which is eminently a letter of warning against teachings and teachers of a licentiousness that would bring retribution by Divine appointment (*v.* 4), those (*v.* 13) 'for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever' (οἷς ὁ ζάφος τοῦ σκούτου εἰς αἰῶνα τετήρηται) stand in clear contrast with those who keeping themselves 'in the love of God' collectively await 'the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto life eternal.'

In the First Epistle of St. Peter the Law of Retribution lies mainly in the background, but emerges decisively in such passages as ii. 7, 8 and iv. 17, 18, especially in the latter, where the ultimate position of 'those who obey not the Gospel of God' is inferred, none the less impressively because it remains undescribed, from the fact that even on 'the house of God' particular judgments fall here and now.

In the Epistles of St. Paul references to the Law of Retribution hold perhaps a less prominent place than, as we may reasonably believe, they occupied in his oral utterances. Accepting as examples of the latter the sermons and speeches reported as his in the Acts of the

Apostles, we find the topic introduced or implied at xiii. 40, 41, 46 ; xvii. 31 ; xxviii. 24-28, and elsewhere. And we are expressly told that to Felix (xxiv. 25) St. Paul discoursed privately ‘concerning righteousness and temperance and the judgment to come (τοῦ κρίματος τοῦ μέλλοντος),’ with the result that Felix became full of fear.

In the *Thessalonian* Epistles the certainty of retribution is clearly stated, the most important passage being 2 Thess. i. 8-10, where, of those ‘who obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus,’ or who ‘know not God,’ it is said that they shall suffer as a penalty ‘eternal destruction from before the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might’ ; the whole context showing that it is impenitent continuance in malevolent hostility to Christ and His Gospel which constitute their condemnation.

The Epistles of the second group (1 Cor., 2 Cor., Gal., Rom.) contain, naturally, a larger measure of reference to the Law of Retribution and the unforgiven state, which, in the last and greatest letter of the group, may be regarded as a leading theme. It will be sufficient to cite in illustration a few of the more noteworthy examples of this reference. To the *Corinthians* St. Paul declares (2 Cor. vii. 10) that while ‘sorrow which is according to God’ worketh ‘repentance’ issuing in ‘salvation,’ ‘the sorrow of the world’—worldly sorrow—grief for such things as the world deems precious and worth regret, is devitalising and ends in death. This is not retribution, but it

illustrates negatively the principle that except there be repentance, which can only be when God is the standard and arbiter (so far forth) of our joy and sorrow, death and not life ensues ; a principle, of which retribution for overt misdoing is the most striking exemplification. To the *Galatians* the Apostle writes, after an enumeration of 'the works of the flesh,' that 'they who practise such things shall not inherit God's kingdom' (Gal. v. 21). And to the *Romans* he testifies that there will be a revelation of Divine wrath upon 'all ungodliness and unrighteousness' (i. 18), upon 'hardness' and every 'impenitent heart' (ii. 5), upon 'those who disobey the truth, and obey unrighteousness' (ii. 8). The unforgiven state is one of enslavement to sin (vi. 6, 16). And 'the wages of sin is death' (vi. 23). It is only of God's special grace, only because in Jesus Christ he offers His life as a free gift (χάρισμα), that the Law of Retribution is inhibited, dominated and overruled for the penitent by the Law of Forgiveness.

In the Epistles of the third group (Phil., Col., Eph.) the subject of retribution sinks again into a subordinate place, or to speak more accurately, does not enter directly into the scope of the writer's purpose.

Yet to the *Philippians* he speaks (iii. 19) of 'the enemies of the Cross of Christ'—those, that is, who hated the Crucified Messiah—as men 'whose end is destruction.' To the *Colossians*, as formerly to the *Galatians*, though less fully, he names a list of fleshly sins which, unrepented and unrepudiated, must bring 'the wrath of God' on those who persist in them. And

in the encyclical *Ephesian* letter, high as the theme of it soars above all common things, he does not fail to (ii. 3, 5) remind his readers that they and he had been once 'children of wrath' and 'dead,' till Christ gave them life.

In the Pastoral Epistles allusion to the consequences of impenitence is naturally rare : *cf.* 2 Tim. iv. 15, Tit. iii. 11.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is emphatic as to the peril of disregarding the call to a new life, the word or message of deliverance spoken by Christ and His Apostles. 'How shall we escape, if we neglect a so great salvation' (Heb. ii. 3). Much need is there, he thinks, for vigilance against relapse (x. 26) into a state of wilful sin : from which, so far as he can see, there can be no second repentance and redemption. 'For if we wilfully practise sin (*ἁμαρτανόντων*) after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins.' There is, that is to say, no other, no further means of redemption or forgiveness in reserve, to purify one who has thus repudiated the grace of the Divine Redeemer, one who in the words of the Epistle (x. 29) 'hath trodden under foot the Son of God and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and *hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace.*' For such there remains 'a certain fear-fraught expectation of judgment' (v. 27). And from vi. 6 it is evident that this is because 'it is impossible to renew them again unto *repentance.*'

These citations may suffice to confirm the view above enunciated that the doctrine of retribution traceable in the canonical Epistles is, in all that is essential, the doctrine presented in our Gospels and presented as that of Christ Himself. A similar fundamental concord between Gospels and Epistles was observable regarding the nature and operation of Forgiveness.

At the same time, it is to be noted, both of the correlative doctrines appear in the Epistles (other than the Johannine) in a form and with a terminology sufficiently distinct from the Synoptic and the Johannine to prove the independence of the several traditions.

In other words, there is nothing to show that the writers of the Epistles which bear the names of St. Paul, St. Peter, St. James or St. Jude, or the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, derived their doctrine of retribution and forgiveness from any of our written Gospels or from any document used by the Synoptists or by the author of the Fourth Gospel ; or, conversely, that they were sources of doctrine on these subjects to the Evangelists. This independence, combined with essential identity of doctrine, on two primary and correlated topics, is strong evidence that the doctrine, thus variously¹ attested, is what it claims to be, the very Teaching of Christ Himself.

¹ For the Johannine tradition is distinct from the Synoptic, while the Petrine, Jacobean, and Pauline are distinct from both and also *inter se*.

(3) *The object-matter of Retribution.*

The object-matter of retribution is *impenitence* or *unrepented sin*.

The typical and ultimate sin is—not impurity, not passion, not heresy—but hypocrisy, preference of untruth carried out into action. It alone is hopeless because it involves, if we may use a Platonic phrase, a ‘lie in the soul.’

Christ’s condemnation of ‘the hypocrites’ is unqualified and absolute. He Who came to ‘save sinners,’ He who consorted with sinners, He who freely forgave the sins of the sinful, says nothing of any forgiveness of hypocrisy.

‘Blasphemy of the Spirit’ (ἡ βλασφημία τοῦ πνεύματος) is hypocrisy in its transcendental aspect, but bears this name apparently only in so far as it utters itself and energizes. Being in fact falsehood (τὸ ψεῦδος) in active operation, it calls good evil and evil good. It is a complete heresy of the heart. It alone excludes, because it negates, the Love of God.

In the relations of men with men, in the life, that is to say, of the society as distinguished from the spiritual condition of the individual, ‘blasphemy of the spirit’ manifests itself as *pitilessness*.

For pity is love specialised—and blasphemy of the Spirit is lovelessness.

(4) *The Law of Retribution in operation.*

The Law of Retribution is the complement of the Law of Forgiveness.

- (a) The objective condition of retribution is impenitence in hatred of the Spirit of goodness.
- (b) The subjective condition and motive of retribution is justice.

Divine Justice is the obverse of Divine Love. 'A benevolent God is necessarily a just God.'

There is no ground for speaking of any conflict, competition, or needed reconciliation of Justice and Mercy.

Justice is Love in presence of unrepented sin.

Mercy is Love in presence of repentance.

The operation of the Divine Justice is distributive, not vindictive. Every man shall receive 'according to his doing' (κατὰ τὴν πράξιν αὐτοῦ). *Quisque suos patimur Manes*. Punishment is the natural, not the arbitrary, sequel of obdurate sin. It is simply a suffering the full consequence of sin, no longer, as so commonly happens here and now, the suffering of the innocent victim, but suffering brought home at last to the author—awarded to him by the Supreme Judge—but determined and measured by the guilt of the sinner.

The Law of Retribution is thus in its nature as absolute as the Law of Forgiveness.

It is absolute, and therefore irreversible except so far as it is suspended and counteracted by the operation of the Law of Forgiveness, an operation contingent on the repentance of the wrong-doer.

Repentance itself is but a response to the never-failing love of God ; Whose grace is thus the ultimate efficient cause of penitence in the evil-doer no less than of the forgiveness which that penitence makes possible. It is thus no exception to the Apostolic doctrine (*cf.* 2 Cor. v. 18) that God is the source of all spiritual life, of all regeneration,—God, Who, as St. Paul declares (*ib.* v. 19), ‘was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.’

There is nothing in the New Testament to ascertain for us unambiguously whether repentance, to be effective, must be *in* time or may yet be possible beyond time.

Concluding Remarks.

It may be proper to add, in conclusion, a few remarks upon the bearing of the laws of retribution and forgiveness on Eschatology.

(i.) Positive, or dogmatic, Universalism receives no countenance from the teaching of Christ:—whatever may be supposed to be deducible from the supposed teaching of St. Paul.

The ‘larger hope’ popularly regarded as characteristic of enlightened theology, and as, in any case, to be ‘wished true’ by every Christian till he knows it to be false, remains a speculation not necessarily impossible, because not demonstrably false, but certainly more full of inherent perplexities than almost any other.

The wide and hasty acceptance of so ill-supported a generalisation would seem to be due

- (a) to the entirely unauthorised descriptions and determinations, offered by some preachers and (so-called) evangelists, of transcendental punishment and the ‘state of the lost’;
- (β) to the habit of ignoring the language found in the New Testament regarding the *death* of the soul, language which decidedly suggests that the ultimate penalty, in the eternal order, of impenitence is *extinction* of the guilty soul, even as the ultimate issue of the work and victory of Christ is the extinction of evil;

(γ) to rash assumptions as to the conditions of unpardonableness.

The last mentioned line of misapprehension is in some respects the most serious of all. It assists, and is assisted by, a radical misconception of the comparative value, if we may so speak, of different kinds of sin. Such misconception usually takes the form of tacitly assuming that certain externally flagrant and generally repudiated species of sin are, if any, excepted from the hope of mercy. It is corrected by careful study of the actual teaching of Christ, of that very teaching which is an assurance of final mercy to every class of sinners excepting one, and that, so far as can be discerned, a comparatively small class. Caiaphas, not Judas ; 'Dives,' not Barabbas ; the hypocrite, not the thief or the libertine ; the Pharisee, not the heretic,—is the man typically and pre-eminently in peril of spiritual 'death' and, meanwhile, of 'the wailing and the gnashing of teeth,' of the 'outer darkness,' of the 'fire' which is beyond quenching and therefore *kills*, of the 'worm' which dies not and therefore consumes.

(ii.) On the other hand, ultra-Calvinism finds no support in the eschatological teaching of the Lord :—whatever may be imagined to be deducible from the imagined teaching of St. Paul.

'Many are called and few are chosen' (Mt. xxii. 14). But there is no warrant for equating the many and the few respectively with the lost and the saved, with the 'goats' and the 'sheep' of the great judgment-scene

(Mt. xxv.). On the contrary : ‘Blessed are the poor’ : now the poor, in every sense, are many in all ages. ‘How hardly shall the rich enter’ : now the rich are, in comparison, few. ‘Blessed are they that mourn’ : now they that mourn are many. ‘Woe unto them that laugh’ (οἱ γελῶντες), the men of habitually self-complacent, contemptuous, laughter : now they who thus laugh are few.

It would be dangerous to lay too much stress upon the possibly paradoxical suggestion here offered as to the numerical proportion of those to whom the Beatitudes and the Woes of the Gospel respectively apply. Yet to any one who, looking out upon the world, is overwhelmed by the contemplation of the vastness and the manifoldness of human misery, present and past, it can hardly but be a source of consolation to remember that the range of actual suffering is co-extensive with, and can never exceed, the range of the Divine benediction. And he who realises this in his heart, and finds herein relief for the pain of his sympathy, is not likely then to be dismayed by the converse revelation, disclosing the destined recompense of them who here succeed—seldom without guilt of treachery, violence, or dissimulation—in exempting themselves from any the slightest share in the sorrows and burdens of their fellowmen.

Only for the merciless shall there be no mercy : only on the loveless, on those in whose hearts the love of God dwelleth not at all, can that love shed no unction of Forgiveness.

The severity of Christ's teaching is to all who love His Name a Gospel of deliverance and of consolation, because it is an assurance of the immutable righteousness and certainty of the Divine judgment. It enables us to participate, by faith, in the great thanksgiving of 'the four-and-twenty elders, who, seated upon their thrones in the presence of God,' cast themselves upon their faces and in rapture of holiest reverence gave thanks to the Everlasting and All-Sovereign Godhead, saying :—*Εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, Κύριε, ὁ Θεός, ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ᾗν, ὅτι εἴληφας τὴν δύναμίν σου τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐβασιλεύσας· καὶ τὰ ἔθνη ὠργίσθησαν, καὶ ἦλθεν ἡ ὀργή σου καὶ ὁ καιρὸς τῶν νεκρῶν κριθῆναι καὶ δοῦναι τὸν μισθὸν τοῖς δούλοις σου τοῖς προφήταις καὶ τοῖς ἁγίοις καὶ τοῖς φοβουμένοις τὸ ὄνομά σου, τοὺς μικροὺς καὶ τοὺς μεγάλους, καὶ διαφθεῖραι τοὺς διαφθείροντας τὴν γῆν.*

'We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, which art and which wast ; because thou hast taken thy great power, and didst reign. And the nations were wroth, and thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, the small and the great ; and to destroy them that destroy the earth.' (Apoc. xi. 17, 18).

He shall destroy the destroyer. And so shall there be peace.

And the multitude, that no man can number, shall dwell in the presence of the Lord,—in the presence of

the Father Almighty, Whom 'to know' is life eternal, —and of Him, in Whom is that life, the Son, Who died and is alive for evermore, Who, dying, 'loosed' them from their sins and, living, giveth to them of the life that is in Himself—even the Spirit, Which is the water of life' (Apoc. xxii. 1), 'proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.'

And so will the Love, that hath forgiven and cleansed, abide upon those whom it hath made holy.

And God 'shall be all in all.'

APPENDIX

On the relation of 'Confession of Sins' to 'Repentance and Forgiveness.'

'Confessions of sins' is mentioned explicitly three times in the New Testament¹:—

- (1) in connection with the Preaching of St. John Baptist (Mt. iii. 6 = Mc. i. 5, ἐξομολογούμενοι τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν) ;
- (2) in the Epistle of St. James (v. 16) : 'Confess ye therefore your sins to one another' (*v. sup.* p. 75) ;
- (3) in the First Epistle of St. John (i. 9) : 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just (righteous) to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'

In discussing the last-named passage (*sup.* p. 60) it was observed that according to St. John 'confession of sin is a condition, the sole condition to be fulfilled by Christians, of the forgiveness of sins.'

From other parts of the New Testament, on the other hand, as has been shown, it would appear that 'repentance' is recognised as the sole objective condition of Forgiveness.

¹ In Acts xix. 18 we have what is virtually a fourth instance, whether we take ἐξομολογούμενοι absolutely or regard τὰς πράξεις as its object. There is no instance in the Canonical Books of the Old Testament; but in Ecclesiasticus (iv. 26) we have ὁμολ. ἐπὶ τ. ἁμαρτίαις.

Are these inferences, it may be asked, inconsistent : or, if not, in what relation is 'confession of sins' as required in St. John to be conceived as standing to 'repentance,' which he does not name ?

The absence of the term 'confession of sins' alike from the Epistles and from the recorded Speeches of St. Peter and St. Paul suggests that it represents something which in their teaching was denoted by, or included under, some other terms : and, if this be so, that term can hardly be any other than 'repentance' (*μετάνοια*).

But why, then, do both terms occur together in the account of the Preaching of the Baptist given by St. Mark ; who after telling us, as does St. Luke, that John proclaimed 'a baptism of *repentance* unto *forgiveness* of sins,' also tell us, with St. Matthew, that the people were baptised by him in Jordan '*confessing their sins*' (*v. sup.* pp. 21, 22) ? Is the act of 'confessing sins' identical, in the view of the Synoptists, with the act of 'repentance' ? Or is it rather a first and practical evidence of that change of mind which, to be complete and permanently effective, would need to grow from a momentary impulse into a sustained purpose ?

The latter would seem the more probable hypothesis. And, if we adopt it, we can link with it the further, and intrinsically most probable, supposition that the Johannine usage, in which 'confession of sins' appears to replace 'repentance,' is due to the fact that St. John (and, we may add, St. James) is addressing Christians, persons who, so far as they were what they claimed to

be, *had* 'repented.' For such it was no longer a question of adopting a complete 'change of mind': *that* they had done already: it was a question of 'owning,' and thereby making possible the remission of those particular 'sins' which still, though they had passed 'from death unto life' (1 Jo. iii. 14), and therefore were no longer immersed in sin (*v.* 9) they from time to time committed (1 Jo. ii. 1). Such 'owning' of sins and of frailty, such 'confession of sins' to God, —and one to another reciprocally,—*is* repentance, specialised by the fact of membership of the Christian society. It is a recognition, constantly renewed day by day, of the difference between our actual conduct and the ideal which we are pledged to realise.

Additional Note to A. 2 (a): pp. 5, 6.

To the instances given of the use of the word ἀφες by classical authors in the sense of 'quittance' or 'release' from obligation should be added:

Isocrates : Trapezit, § 33, p. 364 d.

Demosthenes : c. Apatur, § 3, p. 893, 13

„ : c. Steph. A. § 41, p. 1114, 8.

I.—INDEX OF SUBJECTS TREATED OR TOUCHED.

Absolution, 59-61

Ἀφεσις, 79

history of term, 5-10, 153

occurrence in New Testament, 15-16

Baptism, 62, 69

Benevolence, duty of, 121 *f*

Blasphemy, 37-48

Church corporate, 117

Cleansing, 76-79

Confession, 74, 153

Conversion, 66, 137

Debts, 80-83

Disburdening, 11, 77

Epistles, as such, 135, 142

Eschatology, 146-150

Evil, 94, 96

Faith, 63

Forgiveness, 4, 52, 79

meaning in Old Testament, 9-12

meaning in New Testament, 79

Condition of, 84-88

Consequences of, 89, 90

Law of, 4-93

Objects of, 80-83

Parable of, 91-93

Universality of, 56, 57

Gospels: as such, 142

Hebrew: words used, 7-18

Hypocrisy, 43-48

Impenitence, 117, 143-145

Justification, 66-69, 89

Law, Mosaic, 2, 99, 102

Law, Roman, 4, 29, 30

Lord's Prayer, 27-31

Love, 86-88, 109, 150

Mercilessness, 49, 118, 137

Mercy, 144

New Testament, 13-17

Parables:—

Barren Fig-tree, 128

Fish, good and bad, 114

Husbandmen, 130

Marriage-feast, 119 *f*

Pounds, 129 *f*

Prodigal Son, 91-93

Rich Fool, 123

Rich man and Lazarus, 129

Talents, 120

Tares, 112-114

Ten Virgins, 121-123

Unmerciful Servant, 49 *f*, 118

Pharisees, 40-48

Prayer, 74

Prophets, 2, 12, 97 *f*

Propitiation, 1, 9, 11

Redemption, 68

Release, 4-6, 24-26

Repentance, 84-86, 136, 145

Resurrection, 57, 131

Retribution, 143-145

Retribution, Law of, 94-145

Septuagint, 10-12

Sin, 1-3, 94-99

Suffering, 95-99

Synoptists, 18-57, 101 *f*, 142

Transgression, 80-82

Tresspass, 80-82

Universalism, 146

ACTS.		PAGE			PAGE			PAGE
ii 38		62, 69	Gal. iii 18		70	ix 22		75, 78
iii 14		69	Gal. v 6		87	x 4, 11		78
v 31		62	Gal. v 21		140	x 18		14, 75
viii 32		62, 63	Eph. i 7	15, 65, 67		x 26-29		141
x 43		62, 63	Eph. ii 3-5		141	GENERAL EPISTLES.		
xiii 38		65, 74	Eph. iv 31		38	Ja. ii 12		137
xiii 40		139	Eph. iv 32		72	Ja. iv 8-10		136
xv 9		79	Eph. v 2, 6		79	Ja. v 15		74
xvii 31		139	Phil. ii 9		70	Ja. v 19, 20		137
xxiv 25		139	Phil. iii 19		140	1 Pet. i 3		64
xxv 11		70	Col. i 12	67, 89		1 Pet. i 24		77
xxvi 18	65, 67, 89		Col. i 14	65, 67		1 Pet. i 13-15		64
xxviii 24 <i>f</i>	139		Col. ii 12		69	1 Pet. ii 7, 8		38
EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL.			Col. ii 13		70	1 Pet. iv 3		88
Rom. i 18		140	Col. iii 8		38	1 Pet. iv 17, 18		138
Rom. ii 5		140	Col. iii 13		72	1 Jo. i 5		68
Rom. iii 24		68	2 Thess. i 8-10	139		1 Jo. i 7		79
Rom. iv 7		14	2 Tim. iv 15	141		1 Jo. i 9	60, 79	
Rom. v 5		87	Titus ii 14	79		1 Jo. ii 12	60, 61	
Rom. vi 6, 16		140	Titus iii 11	141		1 Jo. iii 17	87	
Rom. vi 23		140	Philemon 22	70		1 Jo. iv 9-11	87	
Rom. viii 32		70	HEBREWS.			1 Jo. v 16	135	
Rom. xiii 7		30	i 3	76		Jud. 4	138	
1 Cor. i 30		68	ii 3	141		Jud. 13	138	
1 Cor. ii 12		70	ii 15, 17	76		APOCALYPSE.		
1 Cor. vii 3		27	vi 1	76		i 5	87, 150	
1 Cor. xiii 6		88	vi 4	77		xi 17, 18	149	
2 Cor. ii 7-10	70, 139		vi 6	141		xxii 1	150	
2 Cor. v 18, 19	145		ix 14	77				
2 Cor. vii 1	79							
2 Cor. xii 13	70							

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